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"Ouida"

TRICOTRIN

THE STORY OF A WAIF AND STRAY.

BY

"OUIDA,"

AUTHOR OF "STRATHMORE," "CHANDOS," "IDALIA," "UNDER TWO FLAGS," ETC. ETC.

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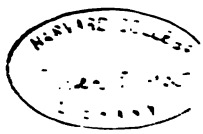


TRICOTRIN,

THE STORY OF A WAIF AND STRAY.

CHAPTER I.

It was autumn; a rich golden autumn of France, with the glow of burning sunsets, and the scarlet pomp of reddened woods, and the purple and the yellow of grapes gathered for the wine-press, and the luscious dreamy odor of overripened fruits crushed, by careless passing feet, upon the orchard-mosses. Afar off, in the full noonday, the winding road was white and hot with dust; but here in a nook of forest land, in a dell of leafy growth between the vineyards which encompassed it, the air was cool and the sunlight broken with shade, while, through its stillness where the boughs threw the shadow darkest, a little torrent leapt and splashed, making music as it went, and washing round the base of an old ivy-grown stone tower that had fallen to ruin in the midst of its green nest.

There was no sound except one, beside that of the bright tumbling stream, though now and then there came in from the distance the ring of a convent-clock's bells, or the laugh of a young girl at work among the vines; —no sound except one, and that was the quick, sharp, gleeful crack of nuts in a monkey's teeth. There were squirrels by the score there in that solitary place who had right, hereditary and indisputable they would have said, to all the nuts that the boughs bore and the grasses hid; but Mistigri was no recognizer of rights divine; she loved nuts and cared little how she got them, and she sat aloft in her glory, or swung herself from twig to twig, crushing and *eating and flinging* the shells away with all that

gleeful self-satisfaction of which a little black monkey is to the full as capable, after successful piracy, as any conquering sovereign.

"Mistigri, Mistigri!" said her companion, surveying her, "who could doubt your human-affinity who once had seen you pilfer? Monkey stows away her stolen goods in a visible pouch unblushingly; man smuggles his away unknown in the guise of 'profit' or 'percentage,' 'commerce' or 'annexation'—the natural advancement of civilization on the simple and normal thieving. Increased cranium, increased caution; that's all the difference, eh, Mistigri?"

Mistigri cocked her head on one side, but would not waste time in replying: her little shiny black mouth was full of good kernels.

"Why talk when you can take?" she would have asked.

Her owner did not press for an answer, but sung, carelessly, snatches of Goethe's *Millsong* and of Müller's *Whisper*, his voice chiming in with the bubble of the stream while he took at intervals his noontide meal, classic and uncostly, of Chasselas grapes and a big brown roll.

He was a man of some forty years, dressed in a linen blouse, with a knapsack as worn as an African soldier's lying at his feet, unstrapped, in company with a flask of good wine and a Straduarius fiddle. He himself was seated on a fallen tree, with the sun breaking through the foliage above in manifold gleams and glories that touched the turning leaves bright red as fire, and fell on his own head when he tossed it up to fling a word to Mistigri or to catch the last summer-song of a blackbird. It was a beauitful Homeric head; bold, kingly, careless, noble, with the royalty of the lion in its gallant poise, and the challenge of the eagle in its upward gesture;—the head which an artist would have given to his Hector, or his Phœbus, or his God Lyœus. The features were beautiful too, in their varied mobile eloquent meanings; with their poet's brows, their reveler's laugh, their soldier's daring, their student's thought, their many and conflicting utterances, whose contradictions made one unity—the unity of genius.

At this moment there was only the enjoyment of a *rich and sunny nature,* in an idle moment, written on them

as he ate his grapes and threw fragments of wit up at Mistigri where she was perched among the nut boughs. But the brilliant eyes, so blue in some lights so black in others, had the luster and the depths of infinite meditation in them; and the curling lips that were hidden under the fullness of their beard, had the delicate fine mockery of the satirist blent with the brighter, franker mirth of genial sympathies. And his face changed as he cast the crumbs of his finished meal to some ducks that paddled lower down in the stream where it grew stiller around the old tower, and took up his Straduarius from the ground with the touch of a man who loves the thing that he touches. The song of the water that had made the melody to his banquet was in his brain;—sweet, wild, entangled sounds that he must needs reproduce, with the self-same fancy that a painter must catch the fleeting hues of fair scenes that would haunt him forever unless exorcised thus.

"Quiet, Mistigri!" he said softly, and the monkey sat still on her hazel bough, eating indeed, but noiselessly. He listened one moment more to the stream, then drew the bow across the strings. The music thrilled out upon the silence, catching the song of the brook in harmony as Goethe caught it in verse,—all its fresh delicious babble, all its rush of silvery sound, all its cool and soothing murmur, all its pauses of deep rest. All of which the woodland torrent told—of the winds that had tossed the boughs into its foam; of the women-faces its tranquil pools had mirrored; of the blue burden of forget-me-nots and the snowy weight of lilies it had borne so lovingly; of the sweet familiar idyls it had seen where it had wound its way below quaint mill-house walls choked up with ivy-growth where the children and the pigeons paddled with rosy feet upon the resting wheel; of the weary sighs that had been breathed over it beneath the gray old convents where it heard the miserere steal in with its own ripple, and looked itself a thing so full of leaping joy and dancing life to the sad eyes of girl-recluses,—all these of which it told the music told again. The strings were touched by an artist's hand, and all that duller ears heard, but dimly, in the splash and surge of the brown fern-covered stream, *he heard in marvelous poems* and translated into clearer

tongue—the universal tongue which has no country and no limit, and in which the musician speaks alike to sovereign and to savage.

There was not a creature there to hear, save the yellow-winged lorioles and Mistigri who was absorbed in nuts; but he played on to himself an hour or more for love of the theme and the art, and an old peasant woman, going through the trees at some yards distance, and seeing nothing of the player for the screen of leaves, laughed and stroked the hair of a grandchild who clung to her afraid of the magical woodland-melodies: "The wood-elves, little one? Bah! that is only Tricotrin!"

Her feet, brushing the fallen leaves with pleasant sound, soon passed away; he played on and on, such poetry as Bamboche drew from his violin, whereat Poussin bowed his head, weeping with the passion of women, as through his tears he beheld as in a vision the "Et in Arcadia Ego."

Then, as suddenly as he had begun, Tricotrin dropped the bow and ceased; and struck a light and smoked,—a great Arab pipe of some carved wood, black and polished by long use. On the silence that succeeded there came a low laugh of delight—the laugh of a very young child. He looked up and down and among the ferns at his feet; the laughter was close beside him, yet he could see nothing. He smoked on indifferently, watching the bright eyes of the birds glancing out from the shadow; then the laugh came again; close at his side, as it sounded; he rose and pushed aside some branches and looked over a broken rail behind him beyond a tangled growth of reeds and rushes.

There he saw what had aroused him from his smoke-silence: more than half hidden under the moss and the broad tufted grasses, stretching her hands out at the gorgeous butterflies that fluttered above her head, and covered with the wide yellow leaves of gourds and the white fragrant abundance of traveler's-joy, was the child whose laughter he had heard. A child between two and three years old, her face warm with the flush of past sleep, her eyes smiling against the light, her hair lying like gold-dust *on the moss, her small fair* limbs struggling uncovered

out of a rough red cloak that alone was folded about her. The scarlet of the mantle, the whiteness of the clematis, the yellow hues of the wild gourds, the color of the winged insects, the head of the child rising out of the mosses, and the young face that looked like a moss-rosebud just unclosing, made a picture in their own way; and he who passed no picture by, but had pictures in his memory surpassing all the collected art of galleries, paused to survey it with his arms folded on the rail.

Its solitude, its strangeness, did not occur to him; he looked at it as at some painting of his French brethren's easels, that was all. But the child, seeing a human eye regard her, forgot her butterflies, and remembered human wants; she stretched her hands to him instead of to her playmates of the air. "*J'ai faim!*" she cried, with a plaintive self-pity; bread would be better than the butterflies.

"Hungry?" he answered, addressing her as he was wont to do Mistigri. "I have nothing for you. Who brought you there, you Waif and Stray? Put down there and left, to get rid of the trouble of you, apparently? Well,—D'Alembert was dropped down in the streets, and found a foster-mother in a milk-woman, and *he* did pretty well afterward. Perhaps some dainty De Tencin brought you likewise into the world and has hidden you like a bit of smuggled lace, only thinking you nothing so valuable. Is it so, eh?"

"*J'ai faim!*" cried the child afresh; all her history was comprised to her in the one fact that she wanted bread,—as it is comprised to a mob.

"Catch, then!" he replied to the cry, dropping into her hands from where he leant a bunch of the Chasselas grapes that still remained in his pocket. It sufficed; the child was not so much pained by hunger as by thirst, though she scarcely knew the difference between her own sensations; her throat was dry, and the grapes were all she wanted. He, leaning over the lichen-covered rail, watched her while she enjoyed them one by one. She was a very pretty child, the prettier for that rough moss covering, out of which her delicate fair shoulders and chest rose uncovered, while the breeze blew about her yellow glossy curls.

"Left there to be got rid of,—clearly," he murmured to her. "Any one who picks you up will do you the greatest injury possible. Die now in the sunshine among the flowers; you will never have such another chance of a poetical and picturesque exit. Who was ingenious enough to hide you there? The poor shirt-stitcher who was at her last sou?—or Madame la Marquise who was at her last scandal? Was it Magdalene who has to wear sack-cloth for having dared to sin without money to buy absolution?—or Messalina who covers ten thousand poisonous passions with a silver embroidered robe, and is only discreetly careful of 'consequences?' Which was your progenitrix little one, eh?"

To this question so closely concerning her, the Waif could give no answer, being gifted with only imperfect speech; but, happy in the grapes, she laughed up in his eyes her unspoken thanks, shaking a cluster of clematis above her head, as happy in her couch of flowers and moss as she could have been in any silver cradle. The question concerned her in nothing yet: the bar sinister could not stretch across the sunny blue skies, the butterflies flew above her as familiarly as above the brow of a child-queen, and the white flowers did not wither sooner in bastard than in legitimate hands.

"How the sun shines on you, as if you were a princess!" he soliloquized to her. "Ah! Nature is a terrible socialist; what republicans she would make of men if they listened to her. But there is no fear for them,—they are not fond enough of her school! You look very comfortably settled here, and how soon you will get life over. You are very fortunate. You will suffer a little bit,—paf! what of that? Everbody suffers that little bit sooner or later, and it grows sharper the longer it is put off. Suppose you were picked up by somebody and lived, it would be very bad for you. You would be a lovely woman, and lovely women are the devil's aides-de-camp. You would snare men in your yellow hair, and steal their substance with the breath of your lips, and dress up lying avarice as love, and make a miser's greed wear the smile of a cherub. Ah! that you would. And then would come age, a worse thing for women like you than crime

or death; and you would suffer an agony with every wrinkle and a martyrdom with every whitening lock, and you would grow hard, and haggard, and painted, and hideous even to the vilest among men; and you would be hissed off the stage in hatred by the mouths that once shouted your triumphs, while you would hear the fresh comers laugh as they rushed on to be crowned with the roses that once wreathed your own forehead. And then would come the end,—the hospital and the wooden shell, and the grave trampled flat to the dust as soon almost as made, while the world danced on in the sunlight unheeding. Ah! be wise. Die while you can, among your butterflies and flowers!"

The child, lying below there in her nest, looked up in his eyes again and laughed: "Viva!" she cried, while she clasped her grapes in her two small hands.

"Viva? What do you mean by that? Do you mean, imperfectly, to ask to live in Italian? Fie then! That is unphilosophic. Take the advice of two philosophers. Bolingbroke says, there is so much trouble in coming into the world and in going out of it, that it is barely worth while to be here at all, and I tell you the same. He had the cakes and ale too, but the one got stale and the other bitter. What will it be for you who start with neither cakes nor ale? Life's not worth much to a man. It is worth just nothing at all to a woman. It is a mistake altogether, and lasts just long enough for all to find that out, but not long enough for any to remedy it. We always live the time required to get thoroughly uncomfortable, and as soon as we are in the track to sift the problem—paf! —out we go like a rushlight, the very moment we begin to burn brightly. Be persuaded by me, and don't think of living; you have a golden opportunity of getting quittance of the whole affair. Don't throw it away!"

The good advice of Experience was, as it always is, thrown away on the impetuosity of Ignorance. The child laughed still over her Chasselas bunch, murmuring still over and over again the nearest approach she knew to a name:

"Viva—Viva—Viva!"

"The *obstinacy of women* prematurely developed.

Why *will* you not know when you are well off? 'Those whom the gods love die young.' If you would just now prefer to have your mother's love instead of the gods', you are wrong. What have you before you? You will be marked 'outcast.' You will have nothing as your career except to get rich by snaring the foolish; or to be virtuous and starve on three-halfpence a day, having a pauper's burial as reward for your chastity. If you live, your hands must be either soiled or empty. I would die among the clematis if I were you."

But the child, persistently regardless of wise counsel, only laughed still, and strove to struggle from her network of blossom and of moss.

"Your mind is set upon living,—what a pity!" murmured her solitary companion. "When your hair is white, how you will wish you had died when it was yellow,—everybody does,—but while the yellow lasts nobody believes it! You want to live? So Eve wanted the 'fruit of fairest colors.' If I were to help you to have your own way now, you would turn on me thirty years hence as your worst enemy. Were you able to understand reason,—but your sex would prevent that, let alone your age. Let us ask Mistigri. Mistigri, is that Waif to live or to die?"

The companion and counselor, who lived in his pocket, and was accustomed to be thus appealed to, had swung herself down on to the grass, and was now squatted on the rail beside him. The child catching sight of the monkey, tried to stretch and stroke her, and Mistigri, who was always of an affable, and, when she had eaten sufficient herself, of a generous turn of mind, extended her little black paw, and tendered a nut, as an overture to an acquaintance.

"*You* vote for life too?" cried Tricotrin. "Bah, Mistigri. I thought you so sensible,—for your sex! When a discerning mother, above the weakness of womenkind, has arranged everything so neatly, we should be the most miserable sentimentalists to interfere."

As he spoke, the little creature, who had been vainly
free herself from her forest-cradle, ceased her
ooked up in piteous mute entreaty, her eyes

wet and soft with glistening tears, her mouth trembling with an unspoken appeal.

He, who saw a wounded bird only to help it, and met a lame dog only to carry it, was unable to resist that pathetic helplessness. He turned and lifted his voice.

"Grand'mère Virelois, are you there? Here is something in your way, not in mine."

In answer to the shout there came out from the low broken door of the ruined tower an old peasant woman, brown and bent and very aged, but blithe as a bird, and with her black eyes as bright as the eyes of a mouse under the white pent-house of her high, starched cap.

"What is it, good Tricotrin?" she asked, in that sweet, singing voice that makes the accent of many French peasant women so lingering and charming on the ear; the voice that has in it all the contentment of the brave, cheery spirit within.

"A Waif and Stray," answered Tricotrin. "Whether from Mary Magdalene or Madame la Marquise is unknown, probably will never be known. Curses go home to roost, but chickens don't. The Waif is irrational, she thinks a mouthful of black bread better than easy extinction among the ferns. Claudine de Tencin has left a feminine D'Alembert in a moss-cradle; are you inclined to play the part of the foster-mother?"

Grand'mère Virelois listened to the harangue, comprehending it no more than if he had spoken in Hebrew, but she was used to him, and thought nothing of that.

"What is it I am to see?" she asked again, peering curiously with lively interest among the leaves. Before he could answer she had caught sight of the child, with vehement amaze and ecstatic wonder; the speech had been as Hebrew to her, but the fact was substantial and indisputable. Crossing herself in her surprise, with a thousand expletives of pity and admiration, she bent her little withered but still active form beneath the rail, and stooped and raised the foundling—raised her, but only a little from the ground.

"Holy Virgin! Tricotrin!" she cried, "look here! the child is fastened. Help me!"

He *looked quickly as she* called him, and saw that the

withes of osiers and the tendrils of wild vine had been netted so tightly around the limbs, tied here and there with strong twine, that the infant could never have escaped from its resting-place; it had evidently been so fastened that the child might perish there unseen. His face darkened as he looked.

"Murder, then! not mere neglect. Ah! this is Madame la Marquise at work, not Magdalene!" he murmured, as he slashed the network right and left with his knife, and set the Waif at liberty, while Grand'mère Virelois went into a woman's raptures on the young beauty of the "petit Gésu," and a woman's vehement censures of a sister's sin.

Tricotrin smoked resignedly, while her raptures and her diatribes expended themselves; it was long before either were exhausted.

"Don't abuse the mother," he interposed at last. "Everybody gets rid of troublesome consequences when they can. We've done no good in disturbing her arrangements. We have only disinterred a living blunder that she wished to bury."

"For shame, Tricotrin!" cried Grand'mère, quivering with horror, while she folded the child in her withered arms. "You can jest on such wickedness! You can excuse such a murderess!"

"Paf!" said Tricotrin, lightly blowing away a smoke ring. "The whole system of creation is a sliding scale of murders. All the world over life is only sustained by life being extinguished."

Grand'mère Virelois, who was a pious little woman, shuddered and clasped the child nearer.

"Ah—h—h! the vile woman! How will she see our Lady's face on the last day?"

"How she will meet the world she lives in is more the question with her now, I imagine. An eminently sagacious woman! and you and I are two sentimentalists to interfere with her admirably artistic play. So you *would* live, little one? I wonder what you will make of what you have got! A Jeremiad if you are a good [illegible] woman; a Can-can-measure if you are a [illegible] *Which will it be*, I wonder?"

"Mon Dieu, it is an angel!" murmured Grand'mère, "such hair, like silk,—such eyes,—such a rose for a mouth! And left to die of hunger and cold! Ah, may the Holy Mary find her out and avenge her crime, the wicked one!"

"The vengeance will come quick if the sinner live in a garret; it will limp very slowly if she shelter in a palace. Well, since you take that child in your arms, do you mean to find her the piece of bread the unphilosophic castaway will want?"

"Will I not! if I go without myself. Oh the pretty little child! who could have left you? Wherever the mother dwells, may the good God hunt her down!"

"Deity as a detective? Not a grand idea that. Yet it is the heavenly office that looks dearest to man when it is exercised upon others! Grand'mère, answer me. Are you going to keep that Waif?"

The bright brown wrinked homely face of the good old woman grew perplexed:

"Ah, my friend,—times are so bad,—it is hard work to get a bit in the pot for one's self, and I stitch, stitch, stitch, and spin, spin, spin, till I am blind many a time. And yet the pretty child,—with no one to care for it! I do not know?—she must be brought up hard if she come to me. Not a lentil even to put in the water and make one fancy it is soup, in some days these hard times! But do you know nothing more of her than this, Tricotrin?"

"Nothing."

His luminous eyes met hers full, and frankly; she knew —all the nations where he wandered knew—that the affirmative of Tricotrin was more sure than the truth of most men's oaths.

"Then she must be abandoned here by some wretch to [illegible]

[illegible] What does the barbarous brutal [illegible]

[illegible] in the breast that rage and [illegible] if it lodge in the breast [illegible]

[illegible] God will smite in his

own time. Oh, little one, how could they ever forsake thee?" cried Grand'mère, caressing afresh the child who was laughing and well content in her friendly and tender hold.

"Then you are going to adopt her?"

"Adopt her? Mother of Jesus! I dare not say that. You know how I live, Tricotrin,—how hardly, though I try to let it be cheerfully. If I had a little more she should share it, and welcome; but as it is,—not a mouthful of chestnuts, even, so often; not a drop of oil or a bit of garlic sometimes weeks together! She would be better off at the Foundling Hospital than with me Besides, it is an affair for the Mayor of the commune."

"Certainly it is. But if the most notable Mayor can do nothing except send this foundling among the others, would you like better to keep her?"

Grand'mère Virelois was silent and thoughtful a minute; then her little bright eyes glanced up at him from under their white linen roofing, with a gleam in them that was between a smile and a tear.

"You know how I lost *them*, Tricotrin. One in Africa,—one at the Barricades,—one crushed under a great marble block, building the Préfet's palace And then the grandchild too,—the only little one,—so pretty, so frail, so tender, killed that long bitter winter, because the food was so scarce, like the young birds dead on the snow! You know, Tricotrin?—and what use is it to take her to perish like him, though in her laughter and her caresses I might think that he lived again?"

"I know!" said Tricotrin, softly with an infinite balm of pity, and of the remembrance that was the sweetest sympathy, in his voice. "Well—if M. le Maire can find none to claim her, she shall stay with you, grand'mère, and, as for the food, that shall not trouble you; I will have a care of that."

"*You?* Holy Jesus! how good!"

"Not in the least. I abetted her in her ignorant and ridiculous desire to exchange a pleasant death among the clematis for all the toil and turmoil of prolonged existences; I am clearly responsible for my share in the folly. I cut *the meshes* that her sagacious mother had knotted so

hardily; I must accept my part in the onus of such unwarrantable interference. You keep the Waif; and I will be at the cost of her."

"But then, Tricotrin, you call yourself poor?"

"So I am. But one need not be a millionaire to be able to get a few crumbs for that robin. The creature persisted in living, and I humored her caprice. It was mock humanity, paltry sentiment; Mistigri was partly at fault, but I mostly. We must accept the results. They will be disastrous probably—the creature is feminine—but such as they are we must make the best of them."

"Then *you* will adopt her?"

"Not in the least. But I will see she has something to eat; and that you are able to give it her if her parents cannot be found. Here is a gold bit for the present minute, and when we know whether she is really and truly a Waif, you shall have more to keep the pot over your fire full and boiling. Adieu, grand'mère."

With that farewell, he, heedless of the voluble thanks and praises that the old woman showered after him, and of the outcries of the child who called to Mistigri, put his pipe in his mouth, his violin in his pocket, and throwing his knapsack over his shoulder brushed his way through the forest growth.

"Mock-sentiment!" he said to himself. "You and I have done a silly thing, Mistigri. What will come of it?"

The monkey cracked a fair-looking fat nut which she carried, with glee; and cast it forth in disgust: the handsome shell had dust and a maggot within it.

"Ah!" thought Tricotrin, taking the nut as a parable, "will that young innocent-looking life yonder ever reward us by corruption at its core?"

CHAPTER II.

THERE were two leagues between him and the nearest town, and this wanderer little loved any contact with the law or its officers, with the routine and details of citizenship and communities. But chance had brought him, and him alone, upon his little castaway. Bohemian though he was, he would not neglect the duty that the trouvaille, accidental and little welcome as it might be, brought with it. An evil thing had been clearly done; the search for it lay with the administrators of civil laws. He had no liking for them, and no faith in their sincerity or their efficiency, but at the same time the foundling's safety needed their interference. So he betook himself straight through the vineyards across into the white long road, poplar-fringed and without shadow, which led to the small, still, gray town, whose peaked roofs and pointed towers were rising far away out from a mass of autumn-tinted orchards.

It was a rapid progress with his light swift tread, yet creature after creature stopped him, either of his own will or at their entreaty.

The women working in the fields; the vintagers at labor among the grapes; the meek-eyed cows looking over the stone fences; the team of bullocks drawing a timber wagon wearily along; the children filling a pitcher at the roadside waterspout; the old women resting under the wayside crosses;—all had words from him, words which left them brighter, braver, happier, than they had been before those kindly eyes, shining so lustrous in the sun, had fallen on them. Man and child, woman and animal, felt the influence of glance and word, as the languid flowers feel the dew, as the shaded fruit feels the summer warmth.

"What makes thee so merry, child? Has any one given thee money?" asked an old woman, deaf and *blind, sitting knitting* in the front of her vine-hung, rock-

built cottage, of the grandson, who came bounding to her side.

The boy laughed gayly.

"No, grand'mère. Better still. Tricotrin spoke to me as he passed!"

"Ah, ah! Tricotrin? I wish thou hadst brought him hither. He would have mended thy mother's spinning-wheel—and there are none like him for making dark things look bright."

"He was in haste, grand'mère. And he had loitered already, to look at Blase Turgot's sick mare."

"And cured her at a touch,—is it not?"

"Not quite that. He says he cannot work miracles, though we think he can. But it is certain the beast let him look at her wound as quietly as a lamb,—she who kicks and bites at all who go near!—and he has told Blase Turgot how to get her well in a week."

The old blind knitter nodded her head several times, with sapient comprehension.

"To be sure, to be sure! He can do what he likes. If he be the Wandering Jew, as they say, it was wise of the good Gésu to bid him stay so long on earth."

"You think he is that, grand'mère?" whispered the boy in awe, that subdued his mirth.

The old woman nodded her head again with meaning emphasis.

"It is said," she answered significantly. "And I have seen things——"

"But the Jew was wicked, grand'mère; and he is so good?" objected the boy, who loved little to think that the hand which had just tossed him a great golden-brown pear was a hand accursed of his Church.

The grandmother laid her knitting down on her lap, looking out at the sunshine as though her blind eyes saw its beauty.

"Pierre,—it may well be that a life led in atonement is the life nearest to God, and most blessed to men. Besides,"—and she lowered her voice as one who speaks sacrilege fearingly, "besides—thou knowest he has no love for the priests, *has Tricotrin.*"

Pierre nodded, but he remained unconvinced; in his

secret soul he had no love for the priests himself, finding infinite weariness in his aves; and, moreover, the true instinct of the child felt, without reasoning on its instinct, that the brightness and the strength, the genius and the sweetness, of the life they spoke of were too unshadowed, and too unsaddened, to be the mournful though hallowed offsprings of remorse.

CHAPTER III.

"You get on ill, friend Turgot? Of course you do. You are surprised? I am not. For a sou you give a sou's worth. Ignoramus! how is that compatible with prosperity? You want a receipt for the philosopher's stone? I will give you one. Stint the corn to the peasant's mule, and give overmeasure to the rich man's fat stalled beast. Cheat the widow out of an egg every time she sells you poultry, and throw a dainty tit-bit gratis into M. le Curé's dinner. When the woman-tramp sits down famished give her the mouldy bread, and when the Mayor of the Commune calls for wine serve him your best and oiliest. As soon as an inundation or a fire breaks out far away in other provinces, let your name loom large in subscription; when the ragged children creep in to pick up the odd barley-corns thrown to your barn-door fowls, drive them away with a crack of the whip. Do this and more likewise, Turgot, and you will find the philosopher's stone turn you gold!"

Tavern-keeper Turgot, thus apostrophized, shook his head pensively in a sorrowful perplexity, standing at the porch of his good inn, the Golden Lion.

"Ah! it is well to talk, Tricotrin, and your lips ever melt into laughter and irony. But you know me,—my receipts are small, my compassion is enormous; the money runs, runs, runs, like a scampering mouse, and never comes back again!—what would you? I have not the talent to cheat."

"*And you* became an inn-keeper? Imbecile!"

"An inn-keeper? Eh, monsieur! It is not only in an inn one needs that talent to prosper."

"Oh no; it is wanted in imperial cabinets as much as in wayside ones; and the bills of a country want doctoring as much as the bills of a café! If you cannot cheat, my Turgot——"

"What can I do?"

"Break stones. It is the general finale of honesty!"

The landlord, amused if not solaced, laughed a little despite himself, and went within to attend the wants of one of the few wanderers to the unprofitable though admirable Golden Lion, which stood so charmingly, close under the shadow of a noble old brown church, and fronting the market-place, then all ablaze with rich autumnal color, where the fruit-women sat with piles of melons, and gourds, and late peaches, and early grapes, and heaps of damp, sweet-smelling, gathered herbs.

Tricotrin left alone watched the market awhile, taking an artist's pleasure in all that glow and glory of confused hues, and thinking of the words of Antoninus,—"Whatever the seasons bear shall be joyful fruit to me, O Nature; from thee are all things, in thee they subsist, to thee they return."

For Nature was mother, mistress, daughter, deity, idol, teacher, friend, all in one to Tricotrin; and in all her protean shapes he loved her.

"What is it? All. What has it? Nothing," was the famous line anent the third estate which once, through Sièyes, convulsed a nation.

Much such a line expressed the social status of Tricotrin, philosopher, poet, cosmopolitan, artist, democrat, and wanderer. "Many-sided" as ever could be exacted by Greek zeal for mortal perfection, he could be everything by turns; but, for possessions, he had naught save his Straduarius, his Mistigri, and a well-beloved Attavante's Dante. He had the genius of a Mozart,—to make music only to a peasant's festival or his own solitude; the eloquence of a Mirabeau,—to remain a bohemian and be called a scamp; the sagacity of a Talleyrand,—to be worth no more in any pecuniary sense than *one of the vintagers* at work among the grapes; the

versatility of a Crichton,—to shed his talents' luster forth on French hamlets' bridal feasts, Italian olive-growers' frugal suppers, Spanish muleteers' camp-fires, Irish cotters' wakes and revels, Paris laborers' balls and wine-bouts; the wisdom of a Boethius,—to laugh at life with the glorious mirth of Aristophanes, to need as little in his daily wants as Louis Cornaro, to love all pleasure with the Burgundian jest of a Piron. Was this the reckless waste of marvelous gifts thrown away like diamonds cast on a sea? or was it a brave, joyous, wise adoption of a life without care and warmed by the sunlight of nature, careless of the gas glare of fame?

The world thought one way; the bohemian the other. "Judge no life until its close has been seen," says the sage; hence it had not yet been proved whether the world or the bohemian was most right.

That he was Tricotrin,—a most markedly distinctive personality moreover,—was all that any one knew of him. It was enough for the people who loved him; and they stretched from Danube to Guadalquiver, from Liffey to Tiber, from Euphrates to the Amazon, while in France, the land of his adoption if not of his birth, the hand which should have dared to touch him would have been bolder than the boldest of the iron hands which have seized and swayed her scepter.

His life was a poem; often an ironic, often an erotic, often a sublime one; a love-ode one day, a rhymed satire the next, now light as Suckling's verse, now bitter as Juvenal's, oftenest a Bacchic chant, or a Hudibrastic piece of mockery, but not seldom a noble Homeric epic. Life was a poem with him: he had as little sympathy with those who made it a wailing Miserere of regret as with those who made it a Monologue of self.

He stood looking out now on the fruit-market, enjoying its profusion of color as other men enjoy wine; and taking a peach from the basket of one of the girl-sellers, as pretty a little brown creature in the archness of her sixteen years as ever Florian or Greuze caressed ere transferring to eclogue or easel.

"Have you had a good time all this summer, Ninette?" he asked her as they loitered in the deep oak porch of the *Old Golden Lion.*

"Ah yes!" answered Ninette, ever loquacious, thrusting her tanned plump hands deep into the coolness of the vine-leaves as she rearranged her fruit. "You know that the château is open—bought by a great foreign lord?"

"Indeed? And you have sold much there?"

"Oh enormously!" cried Ninette. "The household has taken so much, though the seigneur is only just there. And they have made the place like a fairy palace,—mon Dieu! It is so beautiful, so beautiful; that old ruined desolate Villiers is now like a dream, Tricotrin! Valentin works in the gardens, and I have been over it once, before milord came;—and once since they let me look through a grating, when he was at his banquet, with a king's state all about him. And he is so handsome—that English noble!——"

And Ninette gave a little quick sigh as she replaced her peaches in their green nest. Tricotrin smiled, with a slight touch of pity in the amusement of the smile.

"Leave the noble alone, Ninette! His hand would only touch your soft cheek to soil it. The kiss of the eagle's beak kills the wild wood-dove. Do not let a glance of the aristocrat make you cold to poor Valentin."

Ninette flushed ruddily, like one of her own peaches; but she laughed with a frank, open laugh, that reassured Tricotrin on the fear he had entertained for her peace.

"Oh! there is no thought of that folly! Do you fancy I am such a little fool! Milord Estmere has never looked at me even! and they say he is so proud,—proud as a Bourbon!"

"Estmere!"—he repeated the name rapidly with an eager intonation.

"That is what they call him. He is a great man; he is nothing to me!" said Ninette, pettishly, shouldering her fruit afresh and going off to her stall in as near an approach to bad temper as the bright brunette could know.

Tricotrin's eyes followed her, without seeing her, to the tawny leathern awning under which her vivacious face gleamed so prettily; the look of interest and of eagerness was still upon *his features*, and the smile about his mouth

had a certain sadness in it foreign to the careless, happy, humorous laughter common there.

"Estmere!" he repeated to himself. The name recalled many memories.

"Estmere at this old château!" he thought as he moved away from the Lion d'Or and through the checkered morning light in which the people of the little town were thronging, some to market, some to matins. "That is droll. He comes here in the vintage,—as if Beaumanoir, in those old cool green woods were not enough for one man! Has he aught to do with that little Waif, I wonder? No; not wittingly at least. Earl Eustace has none of these follies, and, if he had, would never drive a woman to desperation; such desperation as must have driven that one, whoever she be, to such a deed. He was betrayed, most foully, but he is no betrayer."

As the thoughts, disjointed and vague, passed through his mind, he made his way across the market-place, for once too absorbed in reflection and in memory to bid farewell to Ninette, or laugh an adieu with the dark, handsome matrons, and the old hardfeatured market-women, who were chaffering and chattering over the price of poultry and the ripeness of melons, while the Angelus rang from the belfry. That heavier and graver fit of musing lasted till he was out of the rampart-walls that still circled the small town with their relics of feudal fortifications, their ditches full of bulrushes and great campanula-flowers, their stones covered with lichens and with ivy. Then, when he was once more on the highway, with the noble champagne country stretching in vineyards, and rising in hills, around him, Tricotrin shook himself, as a big dog will shake his curls, and shook the alien depression off him; laughed his own mellow laughter at himself, and walked away at a swift, light pace, singing in the richest and most tuneful of tenors Béranger's

"Diogène,
Sous ton manteau
Libre et content je ris et bois sans gêne!"

till the browsing herds lifted their heads at the song, and the vine-laborers in the distance caught the air and hummed it back again, saying to each other, "Tricotrin must be near; you hear his *Diogêne*?"

He went back to the place where the day previous he had lighted on the Waif.

The crumbled tower, so old that its history was lost in the days of Philip the Fair, with all the greenery clustering round its masonry, and the stream splashing under its base, had been abandoned to the bats, the owls, the hares, and to the widowed seventy year old Manon Virelois, who lived in its shelter very hardly, as she had said, maintaining life in her by sheer dint of the courageous, patient, hopeful thrift of her desolate old age.

The tower was approached by a perilous flight of stone steps which led straight into its interior; Tricotrin mounted them quickly, being as lithe and swift as a chamois, and entered the chamber. It was the only one that could be used for human occupance, but clean, and brightened with French skill, and with the radiance of the autumnal creepers that forced themselves through the crevices and grew profusely over the inner walls. In the center of the gray room, moreover, the old woman herself made a point of picturesque color, where she sat with an orange kerchief pinned under her chin, and the sun on the dark blue serge of her gown, as she spun on and on at her spinning-wheel, looking up with a cheery smile as he came to her.

"Well, my good friend? what news of the little one?"

"No news," answered Tricotrin. "Nobody knows anything about her, and to the best of my belief never will. I have told what we saw to the Mayor—good, stupid soul—and the police are on the lookout about it, but as yet there is no clew to who dropped her there. She must have been laid down very early at sunrise, before anybody was stirring."

"No doubt! Ah! the wicked wretches"—and grand'mère whirled her wheel with furious mutterings of horror and imprecation upon the unknown hands of the infant's deserters.

Tricotrin listening amusedly, let her wrath expend it-

self uninterrupted, while at the same moment an inner door that stood a little open was acting as an oaken frame to the subject of their speech, who stood like some old-world painter's cherub, with a large plume of white lilies in one hand, the other pushing back from her brow the clusters of her golden curls.

Tricotrin surveyed her in silence, and she surveyed him,—a singularly lovely child, with great, dark, meditative eyes, and limbs like a sculptured Cupid's scarcely concealed by the little loose linen shirt she wore, dropping off her snowy chest.

"So! there you are, my friend? Are you not ashamed to face me?" said Tricotrin, at length. "How obstinate is your sex! Now, if you were heiress to an empire, or if the fate of some great race depended on you, the first puff of cold wind would kill you, just out of the contradictory malice of things. A mere unowned bagatelle, a smuggled trifle of straw, a nameless, purposeless bit of drift-wood, without even your origin marked on you, a spurious coin without date or stamp of the mint, you flourish just because you are wanted no more than a stray mongrel puppy, and are of not so much consequence as a lost bunch of keys. Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"Tricotrin," murmured the grand'mère reproachfully, "how can you talk so to that little angel, when you know your heart is full of pity for the——"

"Waif," interrupted Tricotrin. "Certainly I pity her. I pity every new creature tumbled, nilly-willy, into this ill-managed world. Besides, she must grow up a bad woman. Born under a contraband flag, there will be nothing for her but to join the pirates. She will not be to blame. The minute she was born the law drew a bar between her and the sunlight. She must, of necessity, steal the very few sugar-plums she will ever get, in the darkness of lawlessness. She is branded without deserving it. When she is old enough to see that ugly, unmerited brand, stamped there for no sin of her own, she will be one of a thousand if she do not do something to justify the scorch of the iron."

The child, who had stood as if listening, gathering

confidence, sprang, in a sudden sunny impulse, on to the old woman's lap, and held up her lilies to Tricotrin.

"*'Garde! si zoli!*"

Tricotrin nodded assent to the lisped words.

"You would intend to say that though you are born without sugar-plums you contrive to console yourself with flowers; which is symbolical of the fact that nature is often kind to what man kicks? I concede the proposition. Nature is a shocking Socialist; that is why she is shut out from forum, school, and pulpit. She is a white-robed Hypatia, whom the saints stone, lest her teachings should unseat them,—and there is no venom like the venom of the Cyrils of the Creeds."

"Mon Dieu! to bewilder the precious infant with all that wisdom!" murmured grand'mère, concluding that it must be wisdom by a rule that often actuates the world's acceptance of unproved sagacity,—namely, that it was completely unintelligible. "Is she not lovely, the little darling? What a woman she will make!"

"Humph!" said Tricotrin, musingly; "she is well enough. Beauty, to a woman who has no name, no father, and no money, is much like the bloom to an unnetted peach—only a signal for the wasps to sting, and the flies to fasten, and the thieves to steal. Had she been ugly it would not have been such a sin against the future to have rescued her. You, and I, and Mistigri did a great wrong. I am afraid we owe her something."

"And you will help me to keep her, Tricotrin, if nothing is found?" cried the old woman, caressing the child's golden head.

"What does she call herself?" he asked, parrying the question.

"Only that one word, Viva."

"Viva? Not a bad name for a little pirate, and that is what she will turn, no doubt, out of vengeance for having been smuggled into this rough existence, like a bale of silk smuggled on to a rocky shore."

Tricotrin smoked in silence some moments, contemplating the Waif, who, leaving her protectress with all the ungrateful *vivacious caprice* of childhood, had thrown

herself down within the doorway, laughing and playing with Mistigri, who had no aversion to a game at any time. She was perfectly happy now, whatever the future held in store. In her young form life was a rosebud just thrust forth into the light of the world; if in the bud a canker festered it would not be seen until leaf after leaf should have unclosed, and fallen beyond recall.

The old dame glanced first at one, then at the other; and set her spinning-wheel whirling again. She had a certain awe of Tricotrin; holding the credence prevalent in her country that he was the Wandering Jew, could turn dead leaves into gold at pleasure, could heal the sick and smite the healthy, call down storms and call up whirlwinds, become invisible and be always omniscient. So she did not dare attempt an interruption to his musing, but left him to his own thoughts,—thoughts ranging over a career filled with the mirth of Piron, the love of color and of fragrance of Dufresny, the philosophies of Diderot, the adventurous fortunes of Le Clos.

His erratic, careless, glorious open-air life was mellow as good wine, and radiant as noon; yet he too, like the child, was a Waif and Stray. It moved him with a certain sympathy for her, which tempted him not to cast her forth on chance. For the fragile porcelain of a female child's existence might perish on the rapids of that stream of hazard, where the strong gold-dashed bronze of a bold male life could float and vanquish.

Suddenly, still with his attention on her, he drew out his violin and touched the strings. It had belonged to Blanchini, and had often lulled Pauline Borghese to slumber, while its sounds floated over the orange grove at Rome. Tricotrin bent his head over it, and played one of those divine melodies of Lulli's, such as used to echo down the alleys of Versailles, and breathe over the voluptuous limbs of Coustou's goddesses.

He was a master of its melody, such as an age sees only once or twice in its generation. Laughing like some troop of revelers,—sobbing like some life worn out by pain,—rich as a carol of choristers' voices,—sad as the moaning of winds through the sea-pines,—the music *followed his* will as the souls that he moves follow the

moods of a great poet, who wakes tears or raillery at his wish, and reaches now to heaven, and penetrates now into the darkness of hell.

As he thus played, the child, lying in a breadth of sunshine, glanced up and listened. Gradually the lilies dropped from her hands, her playmate was neglected, her face flushed with wondering awe, her eyes grew humid, her mouth parted in breathless delight. She never moved or made a sound, but heard, spell-bound to the last.

He laid the instrument aside and looked at her.

"You have a soul—a good deal of it for a female thing; though I am half afraid you have only just sufficient to get you into mischief. You will never be a saint, a martyr, or a heroine, my friend: but I should not be surprised if you develop into a Pompadour or a Cabarrus. Well, that was your lottery. If you had gone on playing I would have had nothing to do with you; as you answer to my music I will have something. I do not want you; you will be a nuisance; but saving your life is almost as bad as giving it you, and, after your unknown parents, I am the most guilty person toward you. I have not much for myself; I shall not have much for you; but, if nothing better come up for you, if nothing be learned of your rights, we will see what we can do to let Grand'mère Virelois keep you, since she has such a taste for the trouble."

"The Holy Virgin bless you!" cried the old woman. "You will adopt her?——"

"Far from it. No wise man binds himself. Though I am here to-day, I may be in the moon to-morrow. Life is a game of chance; so much the better. We should be stifled if chance did not now and then kick a throne into space, and give the accolade to a beggar, to redress the balance and clear the atmosphere. Adopt her? No. But, as I said, I will help you to keep her. She will not cost much yet awhile; and there may be sillier ways of spending coins than in floating a Waif,—though I doubt it. And I do not expect much of her future. She has a soul; but female creatures with yellow locks, and mouths like

scarlet japonica buds, always kill any soul in them they may have been born with as rapidly as possible when once they are launched on the world——"

"Ah hush, Tricotrin!" murmured grand'mère, entreatingly. "All that I can do to teach her aright I will. You know that."

"Surely I do. But the teachers most likely to get hold of such a woman as the Waif will be, are two devils, —Vanity and the Desire of Riches. If you know how to exorcise them, Amie Virelois, you know what has beaten all the dealers in new creeds since the world began. Mademoiselle Viva!—you will not like Life. 'Plus aloës quam mellis habet,'—specially for your sex. All I say is, when you find out how much better it would have been to have embraced a golden opportunity, and died among the clematis, do me the justice to remember that it was your own obstinacy, and no lack of my good counsel, that made you prolong your existence."

With which farewell address Tricotrin turned to the old peasant, and in a few serious phrases explained to her the total ignorance prevalent through the district of any clew, or even suspicion, that could lead them to identify the deserters of the child, and settled to provide her with the small sum necessary for the young creature's maintenance, so long as nothing occurred to make it possible to enforce her maintenance from those on whom its duty rested. In the absence of this, the foundling, without him, would have gone to public charity. Partly out of the sympathetic compassion instinctive in him, chiefly out of the knowledge of the poor old woman's poverty and desolation, which his assistance would lighten and the infant's presence enliven, he promised to charge himself with the cost of the child, so long at least as nothing should be discovered of her rightful guardians.

Grand'mère Virelois knew well that the bond would never be broken, and that the money given her would come as surely as the spring or the autumn came; though she knew him also well enough to be aware that it was a thousand chances to one if he ever [illegible] *self to see again* the thing that he prote[illegible]

his ways, and knew something also of his life, though it was clothed to her in that garb of fable, with which peasant superstition and exaggeration surrounded it.

The child, while her destiny was balanced and decided, played with Mistigri; something stilled by the effect the music had taken on her, but carelessly happy as only childhood can be, catching at the quivering sunrays on the floor with her hands, and burying her bright head in among her abundance of wood-lilies.

Tricotrin, as he passed away amid the old woman's thanks and praises, paused a moment beside his Waif, as the monkey leaped up to his shoulder.

"Mademoiselle Viva,—I wonder if you will ever make me repent having taken you out of your clematis coffin?"

Mademoiselle Viva laughed where she lay in the sunshine, pulling the snowy leaves impatiently to pieces of the lilies which she had found so fair, that she might reach their golden stamens.

"A bad omen!" said Tricotrin. "You are changeable and you are ungrateful:—of course you are, though, being feminine; you like that gold glitter, and do not care how the lilies die, so long as you get it. How early your sex shows itself!"

And with that he went out and down the crumbling stairway, singing his *Diogène*.

"What fools we are!" he thought. "Love freedom how we will, we are sure to bind ourselves with some unwelcome tie—a mistress or a spaniel, an Art or a Waif! Idiotcy! The child would have gone among the foundlings and grown up into a grisette or a nun; and now—she will look like a princess, and be reared like a peasant, and tease me I dare say all my life long!"

But pity, rather for the lonely tender-souled old woman, [redacted] for the stray child, had moved him to make the [redacted] and he would not draw back from it. Besides, [redacted] sorrows of his joyous life had been when [redacted] d lain dead in his arms with all her [redacted] olorless and breathless, like a broken [redacted] nd with his son of a day's life dead *their* sakes he had pity on this de-

serted thing, who also would be called a child of sin, who also might have vainly striven to find warmth at a heart whose pulse was still.

CHAPTER IV.

The woodland nook in which he had found the Waif, and in which the old tower stood, was a piece of outlying forest-land, between the vineyards of one of the finest champagne districts of central France and the park of the château of Villiers, the chief, indeed for many leagues the only great demesne in those parts. It was a noble ancient place, that had once belonged to one of the highest races of the country, had passed through many owners' hands since the days of the Eighty-Nine, and had of late been purchased by the object of Ninette's homage, under whose domination it had again arisen to its long lost grandeur.

The park was like to that of St. Cloud; avenue rising above avenue on a steep hill-side, and Tricotrin ascended its broad winding roads beneath their succeeding aisles of trees, the Béranger chant rising also higher and higher, like the song of a lark, as he mounted the terraced slopes.

These stretched high and far; the forest and park of Villiers were of enormous extent, with the river flashing through them, on which the château itself looked down where it crowned the crest of the hill. Some two hours of swift walking brought him to the summit, and into the private gardens and avenues more immediately close to the house, which was itself a gray picturesque Rénaissance pile, with many towers, many angles, much rich carving, much beautiful alternation of light and of shade.

He pushed open a gilded scrolled gate, looking up at the blazonry on the shield of its archway;—it was that

of the arms of the foreign house of Estmere. He smiled as he saw them; and went through into the gardens.

A young man was at work among their gorgeous autumnal blossoms.

"Good day, Valentin," said Tricotrin, loitering a moment. "So you have a new lord?"

"A very good one," smiled the youth. "There is no lack of work here now, summer or winter"

"Good. And you have given up Paris!

"I have, monsieur. I cannot be better than well off; and I am well off here."

"Quite right. It is a mistake, that over-centralization. Every soul rushing to the capital, and the country left a desert,—it is as if all the blood stayed in the heart: how would the sapless limbs move then? By-the-way,—why do you not marry Ninette?"

The young man colored, and destroyed a head of azaleas.

"Ninette is coy, monsieur,—she has seen these grand people here——"

"Pooh! Because you give the child time to think about them! She loves you, Valentin, but she wants to be more entreated to say so. Women scorn a timid lover; though shyness is the best tribute to their own power, you can never get them to appreciate it."

The gardener laughed and flushed with pleasure.

"Ah! you know how I adore her,—the little coquette! You know how my one desire is to win her as my wife!"

"Well,—tell her that boldly; you will conquer her. Give her a wedding-ring and a hearth of her own, and she will think no more of the big people up at the château."

Valentin laughed happily.

"Ah! if I only thought she cared for me——"

"Simpleton! a man is not worth his salt who cannot get the woman he fancies. But if you let little Ninette think you only like her as well as you like Manon, and Rose, and Jacqueline, and Marthe, and all the girls of the village, why—of course she will begin to ponder on *the 'beaux messieurs dorés'* up here."

Having left that suggestion to bear harvest in the good gardener's simple sincere soul, Tricotrin went onward; it was his way to scatter seeds of peace, and contentment, and reconciliation, and good counsel, in this fashion, without seeming to do more than cast light words most idly.

Valentin was the little peach-seller's first love; her fancy had subsequently been caught by the glitter of a life she could never reach, but Tricotrin knew enough of the village coquette's honest child-nature, through all her vanity, to know that her heart remained true to her early lover, and that she was of the temper, when once under the shade of her own vine, in the house of a husband, never to concern herself but about her fowls, and her flowers, and her Sunday earrings, and her spun linen, and the young children, who would play among the scarlet beans and yellow gourds of her garden. So,—a homely, innocent, pleasant life would be led in the fair grape country, instead of another lost one being added to the shoals of painted, drunken, ghastly, greedy lives, in the dens of Paris.

Through the gardens, with their statues gleaming white through groves of yew and cypress, Tricotrin passed on till he came close under the walls of the château, towering high above him, quaint, majestic, mediæval, while from the peaked roof floated a standard, with the arms and coronet of the Estmeres on it.

He glanced up at the banner, then looked through a veil of flowering creepers that hung over a window near him;—a mullioned window, partially open, so that the chamber within could be seen. It was the old banqueting-room of the building; freshly restored, with rich deep hues of purple, and the soft gleam of dead gold, on panels, and floor, and ceiling; a splendid apartment, with its vast central table furnished forth as meals are set for princes. There were half a dozen servants, waiting noiselessly, but there was only one guest for them to serve. And he, as Tricotrin first saw him, made a motion with his hand for his attendants to withdraw, and as he was left alone sank back in his seat with a weary languor, his *noon-breakfast* scarcely tasted. He was a man some few

years younger than the one who watched him, very tall, very fair, of a noble, thoughtful, northern beauty of feature, though his countenance was very grave, and shadowed with a look that had a restless, bitter, infinitely regretful melancholy on it.

He looked like a man on whom some heavy blow had fallen, and on whom its effects still endured, though striven against with all the strength and pride of a haughty and naturally tranquil temperament.

Tricotrin stood unseen, watching him in his solitude; and his eyes grew full of pity as he did so. He saw that this aristocrat amid his greatness was as weary and as desolate as a royal prisoner of state.

"Ah, Estmere!" he murmured, half aloud. "After all, how much happier am I than you!"

An impulse moved him to go within, to touch the hand that lay so listlessly beside the dishes of gold, to break the solitude that amid so much grandeur was lonely as peasants never are lone.

But though of a nature usually impulsive, he restrained the desire now; he remained quiet while gazing through the screen of foliage.

"I wish I could avenge him," he thought. "Four years have gone by, but the poisoned wound rankles still."

He turned away at length, after a long look, through which the man he watched never changed his position, but sat motionless and lost in thought, in the midst of his painted and velvet-hung chamber, on whose magnificence the noon sunlight of France was streaming.

"Ah, Mistigri!" murmured Tricotrin, as he passed out down the gardens, the one end of his visit thither accomplished. "Mine is the better choice. He is a prince in the purples, but under his ermine throbs the jagged nerve, wrenched by a vile wife's dishonor. You and I are happier, little one. If he have his grapes in a jeweled dish, we take ours out of their own vine-leaves, fresh from the vintage-feast. If he drink his burgundy under the shadow of costly frescoes, we drink ours under the green roofing of summer trees. If he have delicate patrician cheeks *and hair diamond-studded* to toy with, we have cheeks

that bloom from the sun and the wind, and hair wreathed with the forest bowers. If he be great—we enjoy! Ours is the better portion, Mistigri. The only man happy is the man who is free. And the only man free is the man who is at once philosopher and wanderer. 'Sans pays, sans prince, et sans lois!' His country, the world,—his prince, his art,—his law, his conscience and his choice!"

And he went on, chanting once more the gay chant of the *Diogêne* through the wooded slopes and down the terraces, while the distant joyous echo of his voice reached faintly to the ear of the solitary noble who sat within.

He heard it; and drew a deep breath that was almost a sigh.

"How carelessly that song sounds!" he thought. "Some vintager or forester, I suppose,—but surely a man who is happy!"

And the great man in his palace envied the careless singer.

CHAPTER V.

By the side of the Loire, on a wooded rock, stood a quaint little old building, picturesque, aged, cloister-like yet cottage-like, with an abundance of ivy clothing it from roof to base, in which so many thousand birds made their home that in the early summer the place seemed one mass of fluttering wings and joyous voices. Half of it had been knocked to ruins in the Fronde; the other half was worth very little, save to artists who loved its quaint nooks and angles, and the splendor of the panorama which stretched before it, of river, hill, and vineyard, with the towers and spires of Blois in the golden distance.

One of its gables held an oval deep-embrasured window, whose glass had long since perished and been replaced by coils of ivy hanging down across the aperture. The oval hole was high in air, in the topmost stones of the coping, beneath its red high sloping roof; but it served

like a frame for a young face that looked out from it very often. The face of a woman-child of fifteen; a face with the richest of fair tints, with a beautiful scarlet mouth whose corners curled upward, with great dark eyes that were black with the soft glowing darkness of the antelope's, with a profusion of fair hair tossed backward, and tied with a blue fillet, to fall all over her shoulders at its own will.

It was a very lonely part of the riverside; Blois was only visible on a sunny day, and there were nothing but vineyards and peasant-proprieties for leagues around. Yet there had been no lack of the warmest, if not the most flattering, speakers, to tell the child of her beauty.

The old ferryman who would let her float for hours in his broad lumbering boat; the country people who when they passed her on their way to market would check their mules and give her their largest eggs, brightest fruit, sweetest honey; the vine laborers who would look up to catch a glance from her as they went to their work among the grapes; all who came near her caressed her, spoiled her, lavished on her all the kindliness and enthusiasm of their nation, and christened her wherever she went "Le sourire de la Loire"—"La Fille des Fées." And the smile of the beautiful laughing river, beside whose banks all her short life had passed, seemed caught on her face in its sunlight and beauty where it looked out from the gloom of the oval embrasure.

She was listening with eager expectant pleasure, in the stillness of the summer afternoon. All was quiet: her friend the ferryman was mending an old brown sail under the shade of his cottage, and the boat itself was motionless, casting a long shadow across the water. Some way off, some children in little blue blouses were playing under a sycamore with a great gourd they could hardly roll. Very far down the stream there was a barge, drifting lazily, with a load of hay, on which the men who had mown it were stretched sound asleep in the calm and the heat.

At every point where her eyes glanced there was a picture of exquisite color, and light, and variety.

But the scene in its loveliness was so old to her, so fa-

millar, that it was scarcely lovely; only monotonous. With all a child's usual ignorant impatience of the joys of the present—joys so little valued at the time, so futilely regretted in the after-years—she was heedless of the hour's pleasure, she was longing for what had not come.

Round a bend in the river a rowing boat came in sight. The long straight stroke of oars in powerful hands sent the little thing swiftly forward with pleasant and even pace. At times it loitered while the rower let his sculls lie at rest and gazed in peaceful indolence down the rush of the stream. At times he brought it onward, gently and easily, down the rapid current through the hot and fragrant day, between the landscapes of the vine hung banks. Every now and then, from under the shade of his sombrero, his eyes glanced up at the distant cottage smothered in its chestnuts and its cork-trees; and with the ripple of the waters his voice sung to the rhythm of a Venice barcarolle, a rowing song of Turkish boatmen. The Allah hu! of the Golden Horn went echoing softly over the width of the Loire; and the bargemen looked up from their indolent rest in the hay, and the children left off their game with the gourd, and the old ferryman dropped the heavy end of his sail to shade his eyes from the sun with one hand, as they heard the song, and saw the boat, and smiled with one accord:—for it was Tricotrin.

The child saw and heard too; laughed with delight; balanced herself with an upward agile spring till her foot rested on the stone coping of her window-seat; and leaping lightly down off the jutting stones that formed a sort of crazed and crumbling irregular stairway from her casement to the ground, ran as fleetly as a young deer down the slope to the river-bank, and reached it just as the boat-keel grated there.

"Viva!"

He passed his hand over her hair with a tender caress as she threw her arms about him with the abandonment and welcome of an ardent, graceful child, lifting her lovely mouth, like a red camellia bud, up for the kiss which he gave it lightly.

"he cried, "of a surety you have the most in-

herent pertinacity in living of any creature ever born! Nothing but a chamois—or a Waif—could have sprung down that wall by the jutting stones. You have a marvelous trick of thriving on what would have killed any other. Still—*tant va la cruche à l'eau, etc.* Take care!"

Viva laughed up in his face.

"If I had fallen, *you* would have been there! What matter then?"

"But—I may not be 'there' always! Do not lean on a reed, little one. To depend on another is to walk upon crutches: and the best crutch is but a sorry exchange for sound limbs. Ah! Mistigri wants to get at you; take her. And you have been well all this while?"

"Why! I am always well!" laughed the child in the exultant security of her own perfect strength and health. "I do not think I know what pain is. But for what a long time you have been away! I thought you would never come!"

Tricotrin shrugged his shoulders.

"Mignonne,—I cannot let even a Waif be a tie. I have enjoyed myself; and so have you, I do not doubt?"

"Oh, I enjoy myself," answered the child, with a certain disdain for the fact. "But Adèle says it is 'provincial' to enjoy."

"And who may this kill-joy and cynic of an Adèle be, I pray you?"

"She is at the convent;—a noble's daughter," said the Waif, still clinging to him with one hand, while she held Mistigri with the other. "But I forgot—you must be tired; you must want to eat?"

"Tired?—no. Hungry?—yes. I have been rowing three leagues, and have had only a draught of red wine on the way. Have you anything in your larder, little one?"

"Oh yes! There is some galette, and plenty of chestnuts; and a guinea-hen, though I am afraid she is a little old, and some fruit."

"Enough! It is a supper for a king."

"You will come in now?"

"To get it?—*yes. To eat it?—pas si bête!* Never *spend time indoors when* you can spend it out of doors.

Stay. Run and bring me something, while I fasten the boat. Grand'mère is washing, I see; that is a sacred and solemn business. Tell her I will see her later on, when the linen shall have reposed in peace."

The child flew off on her errand, the cloud of her fair hair flying behind her on the wind, to where the little figure of the old peasant woman, older but none the less active, bent over a great washing-tub among the scarlet-flowering beans of her garden. Grand'mère had grown deaf, and the height of the beans had prevented her seeing the arrival.

Tricotrin dragged his boat up on the bank, high and dry upon the grass, fastened it to a tree, and had only just finished tying the rope when his Waif returned with both hands laden; the sunshine like a halo of gold round her head, her face beaming with delight, and the warmth of the day and the kiss of the wind.

"This is all I can find. Will that do? That gray cat of Sarazin's has stolen the fowl," she said, as he hastened to take her burden from her, with the courtesy he would sooner have omitted to a queen than to a foundling.

"Do? It is a meal for the gods! But you are feminine, Viva; it is not for you to serve me."

"I would serve none *but* you."

"Verily? Then you are wrong, my child. You should serve all the old and the poor. Nevertheless, I thank you for your preference. And now—let us go to your favorite tree."

The tree was at some little distance from the cottage where he had placed his Waif and her guardian,—a huge old beech-tree with wide-stretching arms of shelter and welcome, and moss-lined couches in the depths of its great trunk, and abovehead a broad crown of fresh green leaf. The tree stood some way from the river, yet close enough for all the babble of the water to be heard amid the deep-grown woodland wilderness that surrounded it; woodland ending only where the vineyards met it.

And here, in the hollows of the massive boles, was the Waif's favorite throne; a throne where the child would sit through many sunny hours, watching the birds' flight, and the movement of the insects in the blue depths of

the aconite and the purple glories of the gorgeous belladonna; a throne without one care in its eminence, one cruelty in its embrace.

Twelve years had passed by since the Waif had been found among the clematis; and those twelve years had been full of the long, sweet, spontaneous pleasures of childhood. True, she lived simply in a river-side cottage, with an old and unlearned woman for her only companion, whose chief cares were the eternal wants of the *pot au feu*, and the health of the hens scratching in the garden. But then that old woman loved her with a passionate and most tender adoration; that cottage, with its little chambers that were like so many interiors of Teniers and Van Tol's, was the only home she knew. Fruits and flowers, and the singing of birds and of waters, and the picturesque life of the vine-fields, and the plenteous joy of the harvests, made up the golden sum of her young days; and from the night-time, when she fell asleep in her little white nest under the eaves, with prayers muttered above her, to the sunrise when she awoke, full of eagerness for the unworn innocent hours that the mere sense of existence made sweet to her as they are sweet to the young birds thrusting themselves forth in the spring-tide, Viva had led the pure bright life of a child in the country, and been happy in it as only children are.

She had thriven with marvelous perfection, as though in rebellion against the fate that had cast her out to perish. She had grown in grace and strength on her hard brown bread and her draught of goat's milk, as kings' daughters will not thrive in palaces. She had sprung up radiant, lovely, laughing, fearless, under the shelter of the crumbling roof, as a plume of golden-rod will blossom under the leaning wall of a ruin. And he who had first taken pity on her, had never since that hour deserted her.

He had seen her at intervals,—widely distant ones for several years, closer to each other as she grew older; but wherever he wandered, however long he was absent, the old dame, Virelois, was always certain that twice in the year would come, as sure as seed-time and reaping-time, the sum which he had promised her, to succor her poverty and *maintain the Waif.*

The child knew her history; he forbade her to be kept in secret of it. Nothing had ever been learned that could give a clew to the origin of her birth, or the motive of her abandonment; and Viva, fed on fairy-lore by her foster-mother, believed herself devoutly the offspring of elfin loves. She delighted to think herself not wholly mortal.

Any sense of shame, or of desolation, had never been permitted to touch her; and the kindly-natured peasantry of the district, sharing a little too in her own view of her fairy-parentage, caressed her, admired her, and treated her with a sort of homage that was due, partly to her own exceeding beauty, and partly to the reverent love in which they held her protector; and which did its uttermost to turn her childish head with vanity and willfulness, and persuade her that she was of very different mould to the common, sun-burnt, toil-marked clay around her. For Viva—a Waif and Stray, nameless and homeless, found wrapped in a bit of red serge, and saved by a monkey stretching out a little horny, black hand—was as proud as though the blood of all the Cæsars had warmed her clear rosy cheeks.

The pride was fostered in her by many things: by the adulation of grand'mère, who incessantly fondled her, as something beyond earth in her loveliness; by the deference, of the few people whom she ever saw, to the charms and caprices of her graceful infancy; by the ignorance even of her own origin, which left her parentage a blank that could be filled up by imagination with every gorgeous and wondrous picture. This wayward and baseless pride had been nourished by every creature who approached her, save one; and that one Viva loved better than all others.

All the child's affectionate, wayward, contradictory little soul spent itself in love for Tricotrin. All she had that pleased her,—the blue ribbon for her hair, the bonbons in their silvered papers, the music that told her of such entrancing fables of unknown worlds, the pretty ivory chain that hung round her neck which was as white as itself,—all came to her from his hands, for though without riches himself, he could give what seemed riches to the fancy of a young lonely creature; and he who ab-

horred a tie—even a tie of love—had grown to feel an irresistible fondness for the thing whose life he had saved. Such fondness as was but an instinct with the warm, liberal, compassionate heart of the man for a being so utterly dependent on him.

The life that lay behind him had been filled with many loves. His painter's eyes and poet's fancy had seen beauty in many female forms, under the suns of many lands; but nothing purer, and in its way, nothing deeper, had ever touched him than the tenderness that he had given his Waif. He had saved her as he would have saved a wood-pigeon from the trap, a hare from the netted snare, and had thought to concern himself no more with her than with the pigeon that flew, or with the hare that fled, away from him, rejoicing in release. But in his own fashion Tricotrin, who acknowledged no law but his conscience, obeyed what he deemed duty, even when obedience went hardly against him; and, to his own thinking, having brought this existence out from the death that had been assigned to it, he had a right bound upon him to see how it fared, and into what semblance it grew.

He loved the vine countries well, and with most grape-harvests came to them. Thus he had never wholly lost sight of his foundling; and Viva adored him with a passionate faith and reverence that she yielded to no one else, and which was rather increased than diminished by the rarity of his presence and the uncertainty of his visits. For these invested him in Viva's eyes with the grandeur of a king in disguise, and the miraculous advent of one who was not as other men are.

On the whole, the Waif fared better, having fallen to the hands of a vagabond-philosopher, than if she had drifted to those of a respected philanthropist. The latter would have had her glistening hair shorn short, as a crown with which that immoral and inconsistent socialist Nature had no justification in crowning a foundling; and, in his desire to make her fully expiate the lawless crime of entering the world without purse or passport, would have left her no choice, as she grew into womanhood, save that between sinning and starving. The former bade *the long fair tresses float* on the air, sunny rebels

against bondage, and saw no reason why the childhood of the castaway should not have its share of childish joyousness as well as the childhood prince-begotten and palace-cradled; holding that the fresh life just budded on earth was as free from all soil, no matter whence it came, as is the brook of pure rivulet-water, no matter whether it springs from classic lake or from darksome cavern.

"A meal for the gods!" said Tricotrin, taking out the contents of Viva's basket. "Figs, pears, a melon, and white bread! Why, extravagant one, what were you dreaming of, to apologize for such a fair feast? Horace could not have wanted a better. This is my *fiambreras*, as the good Knight of Mancha phrased it. But the Don consoled himself for short commons with a long name and a vast show. We are wiser than that. We have the fruits of the earth, without bombast——"

"I wish there were something better though! That cat is such a thief!" said the Waif with a sigh, looking down on him from where she was sitting aloft in the curved trunk of the huge beech-tree.

"Better? foolish child! Ask Mistigri. There could be nothing better when I add my flask of wine, which it never does to leave to chance. Here is honey, sweet as that of Hymettus; bread to be the prose of corn to the poetry of fruit; and Rhenish that Schiller loved, with all the Rhine legends steeped in it. I would not change these, for all the cooks whose art consists in leaving you in ignorance as to whether you are eating fish, flesh, or fowl. And now, since it is no fun to look on at others' meals, and you say you have had your own, try some bonbons, *ma mie!*"

He tossed upward to her as he spoke several bright-colored packets of sweetmeats, gilded and silvered in the floral French fashion; and Viva caught each in its turn with a laugh of delight. She had just fifteen years, but she was a true child in heart, and if her mother had been a fairy, that fairy must have been French.

"I am glad they please you," said Tricotrin, looking up to catch the smile on her face where it beamed down on him through the beech-leaves. "Up at Blois last night Madame Dentrée's daughter was married. There

was a grand bridal feast, of course. She has wedded well, to a rich young tanner of Sèvres, and I played for them till the dawn. *Dieu!* how they danced!—all those young men and maidens. The mother was pleased, and this morning she would have emptied half her bonbon-shop on me for you. She is a good woman, the Dentrée, and a rich tanner is a son-in-law to put one in good humor."

"I have never been to Blois," murmured the Waif, bending over her cornucopias of sweetmeats, which, though she would not have said so, were a little embittered to her by being the gifts of a pastry cook.

"No. Keep out of cities while you can. The range of old Sarazin's ferryboat is far enough for your wanderings at present. And how do you agree with the Sisters?"

"I hate them!" said the child, with flashing eyes.

"And wherefore?"

"Oh!—they hate me," murmured Viva.

"Indeed? Then I fear you must deserve it?"

"I dare say I do. They are so silent, so lifeless, so cold, so gray; there is no good in them! I love light, warmth, laughter, color,—*you* know!—and they talk folly, they say these are all vanity, that life should be one long psalm of humility, and denial, and sacrifice. Bah! it would be like living to wear tight bands of irons!"

"And you have a preference for rose-chains? Well—you and the Sisters look at life with the difference of eyes that have only been open for fifteen years, and eyes that have ached wearily for forty-five. A great contrast in vision,—that!"

"But *you* are forty-five?"

"And more. But I am a man, and any man who is not a fool or a criminal, can keep youth in him all the days of his life. But women!—and women behind the iron bars of a grating! But you only go to the convent to learn, Viva; why should you vex your soul at captivity you do not share?"

"Why?" replied the child, her pretty glad voice growing swifter *and more eager.* "They are forever rebuking

me,—not for learning; I *will* learn, though I abhor it, because you wish me, and because you say that knowledge is power,—but for frivolity as they call it, and impetuosity, and willfulness, and giddiness, and pride! They tell me I should be patient, and quiet, and lowly in mind, and as one in servitude always; that I have no right to be proud, and ought to think a vine-dresser as good as myself; that to be plain and virtuous is lovelier to God than to be handsome and wayward as I am!—that—oh! I could tell you for hours the tedious things that they lecture me on!——"

"Humph! So you are conscious of beauty, waywardness, pride, and frivolity, my friend? A nice quartette of qualities? 'Know thyself,' said the sage; certainly you obey him."

"But that is not all!" cried Viva, with burning cheeks, and eyes to which proud passionate tears started. "There are two or three children there—that Adèle is one of them, a count's daughter!—and they are awkward, and heavy, and ungraceful in everything, yet they think themselves above *me!* And they are rude—very rude—grand'mère says because they are jealous of me; and they laughed in my face when I told them my mother was a fairy, and they twit me with having no name, with being only—as they say—a *thing* that is called Viva, like a cat or a dog!"

She threw back her head while she uttered the words that had wounded her, as though in haughty repellance of their power to sting. Nor indeed did they pierce with the humiliation which she would have felt had she not been guarded from all knowledge of possible shame in her birth, and had not her fancy-fed imagination genuinely believed the fantastic story of fairy origin, that grand'mère had woven to satisfy her eager questionings without pain.

Tricotrin looked up at her, and a smile of tender and infinite pity came on his lips.

"So soon!" he murmured to himself. "They might let you enjoy your bright brief dawn; it will swiftly be over! So the children cast shame ere they should know what shame is! We cannot wonder at the great world, *then.*"

"Viva mine," he said aloud at length. "As for the Sisters' offenses, they are nothing,—the good women mean well by you, and you have such willfulness and pride, *ma mie*, that you may well bear with some few sermons on your besetting sin. But for the rest, since you *are* proud, do you not know that the proud never let the barbed shafts of malicious tongues wound them? The words which hurt you are words of jealous mouths, you think; well, do you not know that jealousy is, and has been from all time, a liar and a slanderer?"

The child looked softly at him.

"But it is *true*? I have no name? I am not as others are?"

The fairy fabric of her elfin birth, although so devoutly and innocently believed in, was not wholly proof against the scoff and the taunt which had moved her. Already Viva was beginning to feel the power of that impalpable tyrant of "the world"—embodied for her in the small form of a little French girl, with a shrill mocking voice, and a "*de la*" appended to her name in voucher of nobility.

Tricotrin looked at her with pitying tenderness.

"Not as others? Why, my Waif? Is your foot less swift, your limb less strong, your face less fair, than theirs? Does the sun shine less often, have the flowers less fragrance, does sleep come less sweetly, to you than to them? Nature has been very good, very generous to you, Viva. Be content with her gifts. What you lack is only a thing of man's invention, a quibble, a bauble, a pharisee's phylactery. Look at the river-lilies that drift yonder, how white they are, how their leaves inclose and caress them, how the water buoys them up and plays with them! Well? are they not better off than the poor rare flowers that live painfully in hothouse air, and are labeled, and matted, and given long names by men's petty precise laws? You are like the river-lilies; oh child! do not pine for the glass house that would ennoble you, only to force you, and kill you!"

Viva smiled, following with quick fancy the picturesque metaphor; but she was not wholly content to be a river-flower, she wanted *to bloom* under the silver spray of

palace fountains: she hung her graceful head on one side, in half arch, half pensive meditation.

"But—it is not pleasant to have no name. Only a nickname that means nothing; like the kitten Bébé, like the cock Roi Doré?——"

Tricotrin's humorous smile laughed on his lips; he had struck on a vein of amused thought that wandered away from herself.

"Is it not?" he laughed in answer. "Ask Bébé and Roi Doré;—they will tell you that so long as the voices they love call them, and the name serves to summon them to good food and good drink, it answers every purpose that a king's string of titles can do. Bah! little one! Be more of a philosopher. A name is a handle only; if the pot go soundly to the well, and if it bring back cool pure water for thirsty mouths, what matter how the handle be fashioned?"

Viva, accustomed to follow and catch the fantastic meanings of his phrases, knew well what he meant, but was not prepared to be convinced by it: she had a strongly-developed will of her own.

"That may be," she said, with a charming mutinous pout of her lovely lips. "Still—when one is a pretty porcelain pot it is ugly to have a broken osier handle, and to only go to the well as if one were of brown old earthenware?"

Tricotrin laughed more and more.

"So you think yourself of pretty porcelain, my dainty little bit of Sèvres? oh-hè! Well! I will warrant you will never be of so much use to others as if you were a homely brown pipkin. But to be proud of your uselessness is a thing that has not my sympathies."

The child colored; conscious of the satire and of the rebuke.

"There is no pipkin that would not change, and be porcelain, if it could!" she murmured, with a certain pleading petulance.

"Well—that does not say much for the good sense of the pipkins then, if it be true. But I don't think it is true. There is many a sturdy, honest, sensible pipkin that would rather be going to the well twenty times a

day, to have the children's thirsty throats, and the hot window-flowers, and the poor chained dogs, and the little feverish birds in cages, all grateful to it, and made happy by what it brings, than it would be a porcelain trifle, standing all the year round in a velvet-lined cabinet, only valued for the paint on its glaze, and liable any minute to be bought and sold as a chattel. *I* would rather be the pipkin, Viva; but you, I suppose, sigh for captivity and idleness among a collector's bric à brac?"

The child laughed too, but she gave a little quick sigh, and a hot flush for her chidden vanity and her own sense of its unwisdom.

"But is it so wrong to be proud?" she asked, dropping, female-like, the pipkin and porcelain symbol, so soon as she found it tell against her own argument.

"Proud? In what way, Viva?"

"Any way! To be impatient of grand'mère's friends because they talk such bad patois, and are only old ignorant women! To burn with hatred, and jealousy, and evil, at my first communion, because that Adèle had a wreath on of real silver, and scoffed at my beautiful lilies and lilacs because they were only real flowers!"—

"'*Only!*'" murmured Tricotrin.

"To be full of wrath with dear old grand'mère because she will bake, and wash, and sweep, though I know it is so good of her to do it! To be wayward and bitter, and long to avenge, when the children talk at me as though I were a peasant! To loathe to confess it when I know I am wrong; to long for sovereignty, and supremacy, and luxury, and power; to feel I would die rather than serve; and to disdain anything that is poor, and ugly, and meek, and without grace! Oh, how proud in all ways and at all hours!"

Tricotrin smiled as he heard her self-accusation, but he looked at her mournfully.

"Viva mine, you are not a philosopher: but it is a little early perhaps for that, and besides, nothing feminine ever was, I suppose. Wrong to be proud, you ask? No. But then the pride must be of a right fashion. It must be the pride which *says*, '*Let me* not envy, for that were

meanness. Let me not covet, for that were akin to theft Let me not repine, for that were weakness.' It must be the pride which says, 'I can be sufficient for myself. My life makes my nobility. And I need no accident of rank, because I have a stainless honor.' It must be pride, too proud to let an aged woman work where youthful limbs can help her; too proud to trample basely on what lies low already; too proud to be a coward, and shrink from following conscience in the confession of known error; too proud to despise the withered, toil-worn hands of the poor and old, and be vilely forgetful that those hands succored you in your utmost need of helpless infancy!"

The sweet melodious tones of his voice, that grew infinitely gentle, almost solemn, as the last words left his lips, went straight to the loving, wayward heart of the child they rebuked. She threw herself down beside him in lowly passionate repentance; her fair face burning with contrition, her mouth trembling, her eyes brimming with great tears.

"Oh yes, yes! If they would only speak *so*, I would listen! I am wrong, I am rebellious, I am wicked, and I care too much for the things that are vain; but indeed, indeed, I am never ungrateful!"

Tricotrin, who would at any moment have sooner faced a flaming city, or a swarming barricade, than seen the tears of anything feminine, above all of anything he loved, passed his hand over her hair with a caress.

"To be sure not!" he said cheerily. "No one suspects you of such baseness! As for your desire for sovereignty,—believe me there is none like the royalty of youth. Rejoice in that kingdom while it is yours; it will pass from you all too soon. And, for 'the things that are vain,'—you are feminine, as I say, and must love them I suppose according to your sex. But if you think a wreath of beaten-out metal produced from a jeweler's workshop equals the lilies and lilacs of a spring-blossoming earth, why,—you are no artist, my Waif, but

[illegible] of acquired tastes, and innate vulgarities, as, their choice of appareling, I often fear that [illegible]re!"

The child laughed, but her tears were still on her long, curling lashes, and the words he had spoken had sunk into her heart.

She was silent, and he let her be so while she lay at his feet, her arms cushioned on the moss, and her head drooped on her hands, in the unconscious grace of a young resting stag.

"Proud as a queen, and among the base-born. Lovely as the dawn, and without a mother or a name. Willing to perish rather than yield, and a woman! It needs no horoscope to cast her fate!" murmured Tricotrin in English to the monkey, the language being one unintelligible to Viva, though familiar to him. "Ah Mistigri, Mistigri! shall you and I ever be reproached at the last? Had we better have let the thread of life be broken at the onset than have saved it to reel out, all glistening gold at first, all knotted tangles at the end? Porcelain?—yes! Such delicate, dainty, bright-hued porcelain! And how will it come out from the furnace?"

A certain sadness touched him where he sat under the broad beech-boughs, with the fruit and the bread for his noontide meal. He loved her well, loved her with patient and most gentle tenderness; but he knew neither whence she came nor whither she went—this young life that he had rescued—and it was possible that the time might dawn for both when each would deem it had been well if she had never awakened from her infant's sleep among the clematis.

"Want a palace while there is a forest! Little stupid! What a thoroughly feminine animal you are, preferring the artificial to the natural—the lesser thing that is unobtainable to the greater thing that lies in your path!" he cried suddenly, rousing himself and the child from their mutual reverie.

"A wood is very nice!" said Viva, with her head on one side glancing under the boughs that had flung their green and welcome shadows on her through all the summers since she had been first trusted to their shelter as a Waif. "But—oh! to see those palaces of Paris! What would I give——"

"*Your soul, little simpleton,* to learn the madness

of your banter too late!" he thought, as he answered her aloud.

"A wood-nymph? Bah! you are a Goth, Viva mine. Why, there is nothing so beautiful on earth as the rich virgin growth of wild trees. Look yonder!—the squirrels flitting everywhere, the kingfishers over that pool, the huge boughs all moss-draped, the glimpses of green distance just caught between the branches, the exquisite stillness and freshness and loveliness! What would gilded rooms and marble stairways give in fit exchange for that? Wise was Scipio to leave the heat, and noise, and legions, and tumult, and clangor of the mistress of the world for the cool green shade of his leafy solitudes!"

"Wise? Oh no!"

"And why 'oh no'? you who condemn Scipio?"

The child laughed: she had little historic knowledge, little knowledge indeed of any sort, but she had caught up some stray gleams of classicisms from Tricotrin at intervals.

"Why? Well! Because I would rather have perished in my prime amid all the dignities of Roman rule than have lived threescore years in retirement——"

"Qui respiciunt ad pauca di facili pronunciant," interpolated her companion with Aristotelian terseness.

"I don't know Latin!" said Viva with the pretty disdainful gesture of a spoiled child. "But,—I should love to be great, and I do not believe Philosophy can ever be sweet and grand like Power!"

"I do not suppose you do. Philosophy never was popular with your sex, who always go by externals."

"They must be the surest test to go by," said the child quickly. "If a thing *look* very handsome it is as good as *being* handsome, is it not?"

"Oh, you young sophist! So you are content with appearances? A bad indication that. Philosophy, Viva, is the pomegranate of life, ever cool and most fragrant, and the deeper you cut in it the richer only will the core

Power is the Dead Sea apple, golden and fair to
hile the hand strives to reach it; dry gray ashes
dry fevered lips when once it is grasped and

eaten. Now you, my friend, having tasted neither, decide without a moment's hesitation between them; while men who have steeped all their lives in one, or another, die without having been able to settle the selection!"

"Still"—persisted the child with a laugh at herself, and she paused in her sentence, for in the forest-track, which bent round through the trees within sight, came some six or eight riders, who caught the eager fancy and the wondering eyes of the Waif.

Her river-side home stood in such complete loneliness that save for the craft that passed up the Loire nothing gladdened her sight from season to season save the droves of the cattle or the market-mules of the peasants. Her thoughts of the beauty of power and the charms of magnificence were purely innate in her; she had never seen anything whatsoever to suggest them; and she stood now gazing at the party as they advanced, with as entranced a delight as though she beheld some celestial vision such as she read of in the books at the convent.

They were returning from hawking in the woods of Villiers, and were going leisurely, after some successful casts at herons, with all the customary trappings of green and scarlet and gold, of attendants in the picturesque forester-costume, of noble hounds panting and triumphant, of, in a word, all the costly panoply of French falconry revived in its utmost magnificence. Breaking suddenly, like a Louis Quatorze hawking picture put into motion, on the woodlawn solitude around her, they looked to Viva like some group called up by enchantment: she stood breathless, a beautiful picture herself, with her feet ankle-deep in cyclamen and mosses, her hair flying backward in the wind like two golden wings, and her head crowned with a green wreath of oak-leaves and maidenhair that she had woven as she had talked.

With one accord the eyes of all the riders turned on her, in amazed admiration, as they passed by through the forest-way. Some called a gay greeting out to her, all gave her the homage of bold ardent eyes; one alone uncovered his head as he passed her and bowed low in deference to her sex.

He was the *last rider of all*; a tall, slender, stately

man, with a haughty carriage and a fair-hued face, grave almost to melancholy.

They were gone like the breath of the wind, lost to sight in a turn of the path; but Viva stood, still entranced; with a scarlet glow on her cheeks and her eyes full of delight and desire.

She turned breathlessly to Tricotrin.

"Who is *he*?"

"Which *he*, petite?"—he had watched the horsemen pass without rising from his leaning posture beneath the beech.

"The one who bowed to me?"

"Why that one in especial, Viva? There were others much younger to pleasure you."

"But he only did *that!* Besides,—they all looked noble, but he alone looked great!"

"Creditable to your discernment, Viva. He *is* great—and he is as tired as ever Scipio was!"

"But his name?" persisted the child.

"His name? Well,—Eustace Estmere."

"Estmere? And what is he?"

"You have said—a great man. Repeat your *exaudi nos* for him, Viva."

"He cannot want it. He looks strong."

"The strong suffer."

"But so proud too?"

"And the proud suffer more."

Viva gave a heavy sigh:

"How I shall suffer then!" she murmured. "But does he live here? How is it I have never seen him?——"

"He owns Villiers; but he is rarely there; and it is three good leagues away."

"He *owns* Villiers!"

To Viva it made him as a monarch; once, once only, one fête-day, grand'mère had taken her to see Villiers; one summer-time when the people were permitted free range over the park and the gardens and the terraces, down the dim never-ending splendid galleries, and through the orangeries and the palm houses and the wilderness of flowers; the glories of Villiers had never ceased to haunt her imagination, though it too rarely came within

range of her friend Sarazin's boat for her to have had a second chance of beholding this Versailles of her province. The man who could own it looked to Viva as the sovereign of France.

"And he bowed to *me!*" she repeated softly and exultantly under her breath.

"Chut, Viva!" interrupted Tricotrin somewhat impatiently. "In what does the bow of a noble differ from that of a peasant?—it is a chivalry to your sex in both, nothing more! Your Lord Estmere and I are appropriate symbols to accompany my pomegranate metaphor. He is power: I am philosophy. I lie at my ease on a bed of mosses that have not a thorn; I find their true taste in plain bread and purple grapes; I am without bond and without burden; I take no thought for the morrow; my mind is my kingdom and mankind are my brethren; where I will there I go, and I have none to dictate to me. Now my lord there!—he wears the purple robe with the steel corslet heavy beneath; he sleeps on palace-beds and State care lies down with him; he is the proudest man of his order, and his honor is stung to the quick where he cannot shield it; the garter ribbon crosses his breast, and his heart aches under it with a pain never quiet; he is a great man, *ergo*, he is never free, wherever he goes thither comment and curiosity follow him, and no sorrow can be sacred that befalls him, because the chattering world must have it as prey. I have the pomegranate; he has the Dead Sea apple. And yet—so eternal is the duello between philosophy and power, and so little will either of those rivals yield to the other, that I would wager he would no more change places with me than I would change places with him!"

And Tricotrin, who in those words had forgotten the child he addressed, sank back again among his mosses with a laugh on his lips,—a laugh infinitely humorous, something tender, and a little, ever so little, sad.

Viva did not answer; the young aspirant to Power remained unconvinced.

CHAPTER VI.

"You are content with the little angel, Tricotrin?" asked Grand'mère Virelois that evening in the porch of the river-side house which she owed to him.

"As little of an angel as may be," said Tricotrin. "But I am as content with her as man ever can be with a feminine thing; which is not much to say. I am well content with your care of her, if you mean that, good friend. The child thrives as—nothing but a Waif whom nobody wants ever could do."

"Ah, Tricotrin! everybody wants her who sees her. She is as beautiful as the morning."

"Oh yes," murmured Tricotrin; "and the young tribunes will shout *ad leones!* and she will get flung down in the sands of the circus, 'butchered to make a *Parisian* holiday!'"

"Paris?" repeated grand'mère, catching but one word she knew. "You mean to take her to Paris?"

"Certainly not; but she will take herself some day, no doubt."

Grand'mère sighed heavily. Paris was a word of terror to her. She had never been out of her own grape-country; but it was there, yonder in Paris, that the marble block, lifted up to adorn a palace, had fallen, and crushed into a shapeless mass the noble young form of her first-born son; it was there also, that, amid the blood and the smoke of the barricades of the Thirty Days, the youngest mouth that had once lisped its prayers at her knee had murmured with its dying whisper, "*N'en dis rien à ma mère.*"

"Paris! Paris!" muttered the old woman, whirling her spinning-wheel, with the evening light about her in the old oaken doorway; "God forbid the child should get to Paris. What could she do but perish there?"

Tricotrin smoked in silence. It was never his way to [illegible] himself concerning the future. It was waste of

thought and time, he considered. Rattle your dice how you would, you could never tell what the throw would be; unless, indeed, you turned gamester, and weighted the ivory of circumstance with the lead of dishonesty: which was not in his manner of dealing.

"Do you know, Tricotrin," continued grand'mère, "do you know, I often wonder what her fate will be, the precious child! You see, I am eighty-three next month; I have not very many more years before me; and she is so young, and you—good as you are—are not really her father. What will become of the little one? I may die any day, and you—you wander so far, you are away so long! What would become of the Viva if I died in your absence?"

"Never ask what will become of anything, grand'mère. It shows a curiosity highly unphilosophic; and very impertinent, too, in a good woman like you, who thinks Providence looks after every little detail, from an earthquake that kills ten thousand people, to the nail that tears the slit in your blue gown. What will become of the world? Nobody knows. If it disappear tomorrow it will not be missed in the universe. 'There is a falling star; look at it, my dear!' some man in Jupiter will say to his wife. That will be all the world's monody."

"You will ever jest, Tricotrin," said the old woman, with a little shudder over her spinning-wheel. If he were the Wandering Jew, as some said, who knew but what he might have the mission of the world's sudden extinction to execute!

"I do not care about the world!" she resumed, "I have lived my time in it, and it is cruel—cruel! But the little treasure has all her time before her; and look you, *mon ami*, I get anxious as she grows older. While she was a child it was all right enough. Let a child have the sun and the air, and sweet milk, and plenty of love, and a child is happy,—happy on a bare floor and in a wooden cradle. But a young girl is different; and sometimes I wonder what will become of her. She is proud, she has the ways of a princess,—she is not a creature you can set to scrub, *and bake, and sew*. Among the flowers, on

the water, singing where she sets in the trees, dancing when she hears boats go by with music,—that is Viva's life. But it will not be a good life for womanhood, when there is no name and no mother."

There was a pathos in the feeble, aged voice, as the speaker shook her head over her wheel, with the sun so bright on her brown face and her white cap, and the brilliant child for whom she feared, fluttering like an oriole in the distance among the scarlet beans and the low apple-trees.

True feeling never spoke in vain to Tricotrin. He bent gently and reverently to the bent old figure, while his eyes glanced to the gay form of his Waif.

"Nay, grand'mère, do not disquiet yourself," he said, earnestly. "The child is brave, proud, truthful. These are three grand safeguards against evil. She has much vanity, many caprices, too fond a craze for things out of her reach; but her heart is of gold; these foibles are but the foibles of sex. For her future, we must leave it. How can we say whither she goes? we, who do not even know whence she came! But I have good faith in the Waif; faith that she will not decline into evil, even if evil tempt her, which it shall never do while I live. For the rest, if aught ail you, tell the good women at the convent to look to her. You know that I love no churches; and I was ill pleased that you steeped the child in the acid and the poison of Creed. While women are nurtured on superstition the men born of them will never reach their full stature. But I let you have your own way in that matter because thus you get shelter for her, and thus you set at ease your own conscience. Let the nuns know if you dread anything for your health; and for the years to come, we must trust Viva herself. If she choose Luxury, having known Love, she will not be worth a regret!"

A certain darkness passed over his face as he spoke. There was that which jarred on him in the child's inborn and ineradicable desires for a different life than that to which he had saved her.

"That is true, Tricotrin," muttered grand'mère. "Still, it is the stars that fall you know, so fast, so fast, through
st nights! And it is just the proud ones who have

not gold at the back of pride; it is just the beautiful ones who have but cottage-roofs over their beauty; that Paris devours—devours Ah! is she not filled,—that cruel, terrible Paris,—with the flowers of the country, that give their sweetness to her to be trampled dead on the stones of her streets?"

There was a tragic force in the eloquence of the aged withered lips. Grand'mère was a simple, credulous, innocent old woman, who had led her long life ever under the shadows of the vines of her birthplace, but she had suffered,—specially had she never forgotten her youngest-born, whom that beautiful, fearful, resistless Paris had drawn in, in his boyhood, and his ardor, and his fearless faith, and who had been murdered among the children of France, when the streets ran blood in the days of July.

"True!" said Tricotrin, gently. "Paris is beautiful, and she is terrible, very terrible! For in her the highest and the lowest forms of humanity meet; in her the perfection of Pleasure stands side by side with the culmination of Vice. She is beautiful, she is terrible: for she is the epitome of human life. You are right, grand'mère: none can say what flower she may not draw in—to bloom in unnatural brilliance a moment, and perish of the air that forced it, a trodden thing beneath men's feet!"

"Yes; and therefore the child——"

"*Allons donc!* The child is a child; leave her to the future. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Why take thought for her womanhood? Thinking will not avert it. 'If the cucumber be bitter throw it away,' says Antoninus. Do the same with a thought."

"But it is not possible always."

"Paf! I think it is. There is no cucumber so bitter that honey will not put the taste of it out; and no cucumber so heavy that one cannot throw it over some wall. You have reared her well, grand'mère,—barring that little touch of church-superstition, which, woman-like, you could not help giving. You have taught her to scorn a lie; you could not arm her with a better shield. Do not disquiet yourself; *you* have done your duty, whatever the issue. There is no nobler crown to a life."

Grand'mère's *brown cheek* grew warmer with pleasure,

though she was a brave old woman, and cared little for any one, so long as she "did her duty" in her homely, truthful fashion, she yet always held Tricotrin in a certain awe, as of one endowed with occult and omniscient powers, and it was with infinite relief that she always learned that he commended her.

With these words he left her and joined his Waif, who had just captured a sparkling azure butterfly in her hand.

"You are not going to kill it, Viva?"

"Oh no! only to look at it."

"Good! The Mussulmans treasure every little torn scrap of paper, because on it there may be some line of the Koran. So should we cherish every little ephemeral atom of life, because on it, however small, is the impress of God. Jean Paul has had that thought before me. Let the creature go; you wound its delicate wings, and you see it far better winging its way through the sunset glow. There!"

The child lifted her head, and watched it as it flew high through the golden warmth of the young summer evening.

"How I should love to roam like that!" she cried. He smiled a little sadly.

"Impatient bird, to long to quit the nest! Ah, it is always so with the fledglings! The old tree is so dull, the home wood so wearisome, and it looks all summer yonder! They know nothing of the plains of snow, the clouds of thunder, the driving winds, the storms of winter!——"

"But *you* roam!"

"Certainly I do. But I am not a woman."

"A woman! Because one will be a woman must one never see the world?"

The words were petulant and longing. Viva was happy, but she was not so happy but what she was also a little ill-content. She looked over at that sun-steeped distance, to which the butterfly was taking its flight with all the restlessness of curious desire. What could that

which lay beyond? It was inborn in the

nging for forbidden knowledge; that aspira

r spheres

"Was your mother an empress or a gipsy? Certes she must have been one or the other," murmured Tricotrin. "Nothing else could have given *you* birth. So you want to roam, Viva? And you do nothing all day long but live very much like that butterfly? Whatever shall we do with you, little one, in a year or two's time?"

"Take me with you! Let me roam too!" laughed the child, with her arms flung about him in gay pleading caress.

Tricotrin laughed also; then a momentary warmth rose over his face,—for the first time it occurred to him that his Waif, though a child now, would, in a year or two more, be no longer a child; and that, although he filled the place of her father to her, he had no kinship with this bright stray thing, whom, as it seemed to him, he had but the other day found left to die among the clematis.

"That is too much to ask!" he answered merrily, choosing his own thought not to touch her too. "I carry one thing feminine indeed, but then she is portable and exceedingly small; which you, my Waif, who will be tallest among tall women, never can be. Besides,—the essence of wandering is to wander alone. Oh! I dare say you will find some way of yourself to spread your wings when the time comes; but wait till they are full-grown, Viva, if you take my advice. To flutter a little way and then fall, will not suit you."

"No, indeed! When I soar at all I will keep above earth like a hawk!"

She tossed her fair head back as she spoke with haughty careless security; she might have been the daughter of some free victorious desert king.

Tricotrin looked at her with earnest scrutiny.

"And forget the lark's nest among the field-grasses that first sheltered you," he said to himself. "I dare say! That will be very like youth—and very like womanhood!"

But he did not utter the thought loud enough for her to hear, as he gave a farewell caress with his hand to her sunny brow.

"Well; adieu, for to-day!"

"Must you go? Must you?" pleaded the child, with loving entreaty.

"I must! I have promised Yvon Mascarros to play at his betrothal feast to-morrow, and his place is a dozen leagues from this."

"But when will you come again?"

"When? How can I say? I will not be long without coming,—unless, indeed, I go off to the Moon or the Shades,—for you are fair to see, Viva; and since we are both Waifs and Strays it is meet that we cling together."

"But then—if you love me, you will please me and not go?"

"Ah, ha! You have so much of womanhood in you already that you count the strength of love by the obedience it gives to your caprices, and exact its confession only also to exact its submission? How true to your sex you are, Viva! Nay—I love you, though I doubt if it be wise to love anything save Mankind and Doghood. And all I hope, Waif of mine, is, that you will never reproach me with having helped you to get out of your bed of clematis. Enjoy, *mignonne*; the utmost you can; the happier you are the less conscience-stricken shall Mistigri and I feel at our connivance with your escape into existence!"

Viva laughed—she always fancied herself that the little black Mistigri was a familiar of her own fairy-mother's—and she threw her arms fondly about him once more.

"I am always so happy when you are here, and so good too! Oh! if you never went away I should never have those wicked, envious, wayward thoughts; you are like my guardian angel!"

For she did in truth love him warmly; he stood to her in the stead of father, mother, brother, of home, and of kindred, and of the world; and though the child was vain, and like most children selfish, she had great affection in her, and spent it all on him.

Tricotrin's eyes smiled with exceeding tenderness on her, while over the fearless brightness of his face a flash of pleasure passed. So little had he of egotism or exaction, so little did he make count of his best actions, so quickly was he moved by any gleam of gratitude to him,

that he felt himself the debtor of the child who owed him all, because she paid him in the rare coinage of a pure attachment.

"I thank you, Viva mine," he said softly. "Make me indeed your guardian angel, by letting my memory exorcise all evil things from your young soul. I ask no higher reward."

He touched her bright upturned forehead lightly with his lips, in his accustomed caress of greeting and adieu, and left her to unloose his boat from its moorings, and push it off into the stream, whose waters were flushing to violet, and russet, and golden hues beneath the glories of the setting sun.

There was a trail of light across the river like sheeted gold, into which the small boat glided; his form was full in its luster, as standing up and wafting it forward with one oar, he uncovered his head to her and laughed a last farewell.

That brilliance was shed still about the figure of the child, waiting upon the bank, among the scarlet flowers, while the boat passed onward into the shadows of the coming night, where the sun-rays did not follow.

CHAPTER VII.

"Nothing she does or seems
But smacks of something greater than herself,
Too noble for this place——"

He mused, as his thoughts remained with her, while the strokes of his oars swept him away. He had never sought wealth; he was a republican to the core; he loved best the simplest forms of life; he deemed happiest those whose wants were fewest; and lo! in this foundling whom he had protected was a nature in the strongest opposition to all his views, requiring by sheer inborn instinct all that circumstances rendered it totally impossible he could ever give her.

Through the years of her brief existence, he had taken no heed of the child beyond the provision of her actual needs, and the kindly careless gentleness he would have shown to a dog or a cat; he had never regarded her in the light of a possible burden, a possible difficulty to himself in the time that was to come. The joyous and negligent temper of Tricotrin was not one that regarded the future; to rescue the child had been an impulse with him; that she would ever require more than the few easily granted wants of childhood, that the time would ever come when she would grow impatient of the life she led, had never occurred to him until now that her own words and those of the old woman had suggested the doubt. He was used himself, by choice, to live much among the people; his time, by preference, was much passed among the peasantries of divers nations. He was habituated to seeing young girls who were content enough if they got a new ribbon for their hair, or rode queen of a harvest on a bullock-drawn wagon: that the Waif would prove a young rebel, with the pride of a princess and fastidious tastes curiously inherent in her, was an additional perplexity to the whole dilemma of her maintenance.

The flower was fair, and was yet only in its bud; its hereafter had never risen before him as a matter of meditation and of possible future embarrassment. And even now he threw the fear from him: it was free to float on the air in its own happy fashion, sun-kissed and wind-tossed, it bloomed after Nature's own will with it, and all its fragrance was natural, like the sweetness of roses;—it was the best thing that could betide any opening blossom to be left so wholly to Nature. With Nature, therefore, he left too her future.

And he sent his boat up the stream with a swift strong impulsion, shaking the care from his thoughts as he shook the water-drops from his oars: he was something late for the feast of Yvon Mascarros, and Tricotrin never broke promises even in so small a matter as a vine-dresser's marriage-feast.

Care never waited with him; it will scarcely ever tarry where it is not entertained with welcome, and the rich lit nature of the man had no kinship with it as a guest.

There had been times, inevitable in every life, when he had suffered with the intense passion of all vivid characters; but they had been few and far between, and the gracious gladness of his inherent temper had always resumed supremacy. Not for him the feverish unrest of ambition; the carking thirst of the seekers of wealth; the vacillating hopes and fears of those whose breath is the breath of the world's applause. He was not pursued by the haunting terrors of the hangers-on of public favor; he was not pressed by the uphill race of men who pant their hearts out in the struggle for gold; he was not driven to find no sweetness in sleep, no beauty in summer hours, no charm in women's smile, because greed hunted him on and on, through dark and devious ways, seeking the rivers of gold. He sought neither riches nor renown; he greeted each dawn without regret for its yesterday; he saw the sun set and the night descend with happy Jean Paul humor, saying in those words of wisdom, "I am content since I have lived to-day!"

And he loved the people, and was loved by them; making his home wheresoever men enjoyed and suffered.

Many wondered whence he came; many wove a thousand marvelous histories to account for the anomalies which even the least intelligent could mark in him: none knew anything for truth concerning his origin, his nation, or his history. Old people in this vine-country remembered him a bright boy of twenty years, with the bronze of southern suns on his fair skin, and the fire of a passionate youth in his blue eyes; who had come no one knew whence, who laughed, and loved, and played, and worked among them; and left them often for long absences, and returned to them always the same, however many years had passed, however slight the stay he made. He was "Tricotrin;" all was said in that; he came and went whenever it pleasured him, never questioned, ever welcomed, like the swallows of the spring.

He was not wholly of them, that even the peasantry felt; but he was *with* them heart and soul, and they loved him better for that nameless difference, that intangible unlikeness, which made them, while he toiled among them and feasted *among them, yet* perceive a royalty in him

that he never lost; even as the shepherd-kings of the old east were none less kingly to their people because they lived on pulse and water, because they sheared the fleece and folded the herds, and dwelt under the tents of their wandering people.

The people loved him in all lands; especially they loved him in this beautiful France, which he had made his mistress in preference over all the fair sisters of Europe. The people caressed him, obeyed him, adored him, with a loyalty that would have rendered him an irresistible power in times of revolution; and as he rowed down the river he knew well that there was not a cottage on its banks, not a water-mill on its shores, not a cabaret in its villages, under whose roof he would not have been welcome as is the summer sun in mowing time, when its early smile gives promise of the after-math.

But he did not care to go ashore in that hot and lustrous summer night. Three miles down the river he overtook the hay-barge, slowly floating in the moonlight with its load of fresh-cut grasses, odorous as violets. It drifted through the broad, sheeted, silver radiance lazily, charmingly, with its great sail black against the sky, and the fragrant dews on its huge soft mounds of fodder that were tossed loosely together, with the wild clover and the white marguérites, scarcely dead, that had been mown with them. He hailed it, knowing its owner well, and the men recognized him with a shout of delight. The barge was stopped; in a second more he had leapt up among them, received with vociferous delight; they were to sail all night down the stream, and they took his little boat in tow with eager pleasure.

The skipper was a lithe, handsome, black-browed Marseillais, with his broad chest bare, and a red sash knotted round his loins, and great gold earrings in his ears, who had taken the peaceful Loire traffic for love of a Loiret woman.

The skipper had earned a perilous repute for lawless piratical voyages in the southern waters, and was said to be as hot and as swift and as fierce as his own tramontana; hence the people of the woman he loved denied her to him with bitter words and loud revilings. Margot clung to

her fiery southern lover, and refused to be comforted: there was misery for the child, and feud between her suitor and her brethren. At last, in one evil day, the latter heaped insult on insult till the Marseillais' blood of flame leaped up like a sword from its scabbard; his knife flashed in the sun, and would have darted down, first to be sheathed in her brother's breast and then in his own, had not an outstretched hand turned the blow, at price of a wound in its own palm, and Tricotrin's voice called out—"Has France no foes that her sons fight together?"

The offenders were passionately contrite, they wept like children to see his blood, they implored his pardon, they cursed themselves: he laughed and drew little Margot to him with his unwounded arm.

"Little one! Are you still not afraid of that sea-lion? No? You think he is so sure not to wound *you*? Well, then—if they are sorry for my hurt, your brethren must give you to me to give to him. You are the only lion-tamer for this wild beast of ours!"

And they gave her: so he made peace among them, and won for evermore the fierce, ardent, grateful soul of the Marseillais.

Margot's lion never harmed her; as her lion to Una, was Eudes Caros to the pretty, brown, soft, tender child of the Loire. He gave up the wild night roaming on the shores of the Riviera, for peaceful river-trading between the banks of her native stream; and now, in the little cabin of the hay-barge, where the solitary oil lamp hung above her lovely bent head, Margot sat, with a dreaming happy smile in her drooped dark eyes and on her thoughtful mouth, as she gazed at a picture of Christ hung under the lamp, and looked from that downward on the child that lay asleep at her breast.

"Did Mary know he would be God and yet die on the cross? Ah, how she must have longed that he had been but a mortal child who could grow to manhood, and live on obscure but unharmed!" thought little Margot, pressing closer the flushed cheek of her first-born; the thought was wholly a woman's!

Better an ignoble safety, an inglorious impunity, for the man that they mould, than the divinity of martyrdom,

than the crucifixion of genius! Better that the soul, which is not of them, should die out in apathy than that the body they conceive and nourish should perish!

So they say—Margot and her million of sisters upon earth: and, of the sons they bear, none go up to Calvary, but thousands cumber the world as swine. Yet these women are good; their kisses are tender, their hands are pure: it is but their souls that are dead; it is but the souls of their children they kill.

Whether Margot's son were destined to become poet or swineherd, leader or servitor among men, he slept happily in her arms now, and she dreamt happily over him, while the barge floated in moonlight down the stream, and Tricotrin, nonchalantly cast upon the great sweet piles of hay, talked with the Marseillais, watched the shadowy landscapes drifting by, or touched now and then the Straduarius to fitful cadences full of river-song.

The night was very warm and profoundly still; one of the splendid nights of France, with stars innumerable burning through a cloudless atmosphere. The slow, calm passage of the barge with the fresh odor of its freight rising on the air, with the woods and vineyards and villages of the river-banks softened to an inconceivable beauty by the light, with the murmur of the water as it parted and met again, and with the occasional chime of belfry-bells from the land ringing some mellow monotone as they told the flight of an hour, was the fittest method for the passage of a summer night, and held a thousand poems and pictures in its indolent starlit voyage. Such pictures, such poems, as he best loved to fill his sight, and his heart, and his memory with; such as seen, and felt, and treasured, with the true instinct of pure love, had made his life itself the poem and the picture that it was.

As the evening wore on, Caros, prouder of the passenger his barge bore than he would have been of a king for his freight, went below to his Margot; Tricotrin remained stretched on the hay with all the fragrant dead flowers and saintfoin beneath him in a couch that was easier than the down of monarchs' beds. He fell asleep, sleep coming as lightly and as swiftly to him as it comes to a tired, healthy child; a night-bird's wing sometimes

softly touching his forehead, a cadence from a monastery chime sometimes mingling with his dreams. When he awoke it was night still; there was a break of dawn eastwards, but the stars were still out, the barge was still winding its tranquil way down the water.

Leaning his arms down in the yielding grasses he lay looking awhile, lazily, at the mark where the keel cut the stream, at the dews that had fallen on the grasses, at the heavy black sails swinging idly to and fro. His indolence did not endure long; a face near him caught his eyes and his pity; and with Tricotrin human sympathies were very keen and swift, human woe and joy the sure chords to arouse and to move him. The face he saw now was one of infinite pain; it was the face of a man, who, like himself, had chosen that odorous mountain of grasses and herbs for a couch; and who was lying there looking, with wide-opened eyes, down into the ebb and flow of the water against the sides of the barge.

He was a man beyond middle age, with a rugged, homely, weather-worn countenance, and large, black, pathetic eyes that, out of the roughness of the other features, gazed, with a piteous, sightless, yearning look, into vacancy;—a look as of one startled and astray in some great agony. He wore the usual blouse of the working-day, and his hair was unkempt, his linen soiled, his hand black with the pitch with which he had that day caulked the sides of the barge; but there was that in the mute, intense wondering anguish of the eyes that gave at once grandeur and exceeding pathos to his aspect. It was the look of a noble animal who has been struck a cruel blow, and who will not hurt the hand that struck it, even in just vengeance.

Tricotrin spoke to him gently, on some trifle of the night; the man started, answered wearily, then lapsed into his former attitude. No questions fared better; he replied to them with a certain oppressive effort, but only an instant afterward to fall afresh into the same apathy and absorption: he was but a common sailor or fisherman, with nothing above the common in him, yet the patient, terrible despair upon his face—a despair as of one incessantly *seeking* what was lost—lent him dignity, *gave him greatness.*

Tricotrin let him be; he knew how cruel is the kindness which forces itself in upon the silence and the solitude of calamity; and he saw too that here the mind was not wholly present, that in some sense reason had been dulled by suffering, though sufficient perception remained for the mechanical words and actions of daily existence. He said no more; but in the still, dark dawn, the music of his violin softly supplied the place of speech. There were many times when, through its manifold voices speaking in a universal tongue, he uttered to himself and others what the words of his mouth could not have phrased. Through it all the genius in him spoke; and in it all the heart of the player went out to the hearts of his fellow-men.

The music, unnoticed at first, failing at first to penetrate the profound self-absorption of the seaman, reached his ear gradually, as wave on wave of gracious sound broke on the air like the tide on a shore with rhythmical recurrent music. He did not note it as what it was; he did not make visible sign that he even heard it; but gradually consciousness of it stole upon him.

The music filled the quiet of the hour, that was only stirred besides by the lapping of the water as the vessel glided down; music low, and sad, and sweet; music like a psalm of consolation, with all the blind hungered yearning of a soul adrift upon a bitter world, told and answered in it. It pierced the lethargy that enshrouded a darkened, desolate mind; where the sailor leaned, with his chin resting on his hands and his eyes gazing down into the river, a certain change came over him, like the first quiver of returning life into one half dead through stupor; great tears started into his eyes, softening their vacancy; he moved with restless pain, then started from his bed of hay with a gesture of intolerable suffering.

"Hush,—hush! It reminds me of her voice!"

The music ceased even as he spoke; Tricotrin touched him.

"Of her? Of whom?"

The sailor's eyes turned on him with the tears floating in their weary depths.

"I cannot bear it! It is like her—like her voice as she

sung her ballads!" he muttered, regardless of the question, lost only in the one memory that filled the darkened chambers of his mind to the exclusion of all outward sight. "I have lost her, you know, she went from me so long ago. One morning she laughed in my eyes, and kissed my mouth, and threw her white arms around my neck in play, with the sun all so bright on her face; and at night—at night, you remember?—there were only ashes on the hearth, silence in the chamber, darkness everywhere. Darkness that no light ever breaks; no light ever will break,—till I find her!"

He was ignorant that he spoke to one who had never ere then looked upon his face; he had no remembrance that the words he uttered had no meaning to the ear that heard them; to him his grief filled the world, his loss laid the earth desolate.

Tricotrin rested his hand gently on the other's shoulder; he saw that his music had broken the stupor of the brain, and stirred, though but to troubled shapeless motion, the locked thoughts of its solitary musing; he waited with patience to do more.

"To find her?" he repeated. "Then this one whom you love is not dead?"

"Dead? No—she is not dead," the seaman answered slowly, while his great eyes searched his companion's with a heart-rending look of search and of bewilderment. "That is it—see you!—she is not dead. Dead women lie cold and motionless, their fair limbs do not stir, nor their eyes unclose, nor their lips breathe, but they *are* there—you can hold them, though their heart does not beat on yours; you can caress them, though your kiss strikes on ice; you can wind their hair round your hands, though they know your touch no longer. They *are* there, though they lie lifeless on their bridal-beds. But she was gone, and did not leave even the beauty of her body to me. The chamber was dark, still, desolate; there was not even a dead woman to gather the sunbeams about her, and to seem to smile with their light on her mouth!"

There was an unutterable tenderness and desolation in the answer; *his hearer knew* all the meaning of those

wandering pathetic words;—there is a loss worse than the loss that death causes. He divined what that loss had been; but he saw that the blow it had dealt had numbed the brain of the man who suffered by it out of all comprehension of its truth.

"She is not dead?" he said softly. "Then hope is still with you?"

The puzzled, aching eyes answered him with a look that struck him to the soul.

"Hope—hope! Yes—I hope. I suppose I hope, since I live on;—but the years are many, and I grow weary. It was in my youth that I lost her; and now I grow old. Ever and again I think I behold her; some girl's laugh on a grape-wagon, some girl's eyes that smile at me through the lattice that opens at dawn, some girl's round limbs where they bathe and float in the summer sea, has something of her, and makes me think I have found her. But it is never so;—they do not know me; they have no light in their glance when they see me; they have no place in their hearts for me. I wander far and wide; I go east and west, north and south, I seek her in the cities and forests, I watch before the palaces, I search in the hospital-wards, I look for her in the crowds of the streets, I wait for her in the loneliness of the plains—all in vain, all in vain!"

"Is it so many years since you lost her?"

"It is many. I cannot tell how many. I keep no count. The seasons come and go, but she does not come with them. Ah! it is terrible that!—in a throng to see but one face, in a world to hear but one voice, and the face forever eluding, and the voice forever mocking you! And the earth is so wide, you know;—one may toil on and on and on and never reach nearer! The house is ready for her just as she left it; the flowers are dead, I cannot help that,—she is so long away,—but all is as she left it. I try always to keep it so; I think it will pleasure her when she comes back."

His head dropped on his chest with a heavy sigh, the lethargy stirred for awhile by the power of the music returned; the brooding patience settled down again on the *features* which for an instant had quivered and changed.

He was not conscious that he had spoken to a stranger; he had only uttered the ever-present thoughts of his mind with the wandering eloquence born of the intensity of one single and dominant feeling.

A voice called him to the farther end of the vessel: with the mechanical instinct of obedience he swung down from the piles of the hay and went whither he was bidden,—become only a common boatman, gone to the coiling of a rope, the reefing of a sail.

Tricotrin watched him as he passed aft in the dusky dawn that was now faintly reddened by the first approach of day: his heart ached for this man who with his hard life and his deadened reason could yet find strength and greatness for such love as this.

"A woman!" he thought. "The same old story ever! And the same blow which pierces Estmere's purples strikes through the seaman's canvas shirt! There is no mail against that stroke, either in power or in poverty."

The dark handsome head of the Marseillais looked up at him at that minute from the cabin stair: Tricotrin signed him to come higher and leant towards him.

"Who is that boatman of yours, good Caros?"

Caros raised himself with a sailor's lightness and swiftness on to the height of the mounds of dry grass; he was a gentle-hearted man, though the wild fire of southern pirates ran in his blood, and to the one who had given him his Loirais' bride he bore a passionate devotion.

"You speak of poor Bruno, my friend?" he answered. "He is a good sailor on rougher waters than rivers, though his brain is gone for all but his work. I knew him well down in the south; he is poor, and so I gave him a berth and a turn on my barge."

"Bruno! Is that his name?"

"Jean Bruno: yes. We were lads together. And we were on the same craft for years in the Mediterranean days. He was a fine fellow—a noble fellow—till she ruined him."

"His wife?"

"Ay! His wife. We were lads together, though he looks so old, and I—I feel as young as Margot! He is scarce *forty, Bruno. I remember* her well; she was fifteen

when she wedded him, and he a lad of twenty-two. She was the bastard child of some noble, a beautiful thing, all yellow hair, and smiling lips, and sunny eyes, and white soft limbs; she bewitched that black strong stalwart fellow, who was half lion, half lamb. He adored her—ah! —as those great, brave, mild natures always do love. It was almost terrible to see how that soft little piece of bright-colored life held the whole heart and soul of the man! Well,—he had one year of happiness, one year of a fool's paradise; he went short coasting voyages, no more, he could not bear to be away from the little cabin where she had everything he could get her—birds and flowers, and quaint Indian things that the Indian ships brought home. She was good enough to him; a gay, laughing, sweet-tempered, mindless thing; who could have thought she had been so cruel? One day he bade her farewell at dawn; he was going on a fishing trip to be absent only the day; I was waiting for him outside the cabin; I saw her laugh, and caress him, and wave her hands in adieu. We went out to sea. We were at sea all day. We got home with three boats' load by midnight. The light that always burned in her cabin was out: he flew like a madman the half league down the shore, and burst his door open,—Madelon was not there. Ah God! to this day I have never forgotten the sight of Bruno!——"

The Marseillais paused; the tide of recollection rushed with painful force in on him; when he spoke his voice was low and full of pity.

"It killed the mind in him;—shattered it out of all sense of the truth. We found the truth soon. Favette had gone to shame; a shame that looked brilliant to her beside the innocent quiet sea-life that she led. The leaven of her mother was in her. She had gone to the stage; a great actor had made her his mistress. But Bruno never knew this. He could not comprehend when we tried to tell it him. She was lost; that was all he knew; that she had sinned against him he would not, or could not, understand. It was horrible!—he thought she had been stolen from him, he loved her so tenderly still! He has searched for her ever since. Time has not killed that love in him, *though her crime* has killed his reason. The little cabin

down by the south is always kept ready for her return; not a thing is touched; and meanwhile he wanders all over France seeking what he can never find! You know who Favette is?"

"No. She lives then?"

"She lives. Lives in—Coriolis."

"Coriolis! Our great actress!—what?—the wife of that man?"

"Ay! How many such women own even as good a past as to have slept on the honest heart of an honest man they betrayed?" said the Marseillais bitterly. "Their nests are mostly fouler than that sea-bird's nest. Yes, she is Coriolis; but he does not know it, mind you. Though he seeks her, still his search is chiefly southward; he has never come on the dazzling sinner of Paris. Pray God that he never may! It is fearful enough, his quest for her, his task that can never be ended, his hope that can never be granted; but it is better, at its worst, than the truth could be to him if he ever looked again on the face of his wife!"

He said no more, but turned quickly, and busied himself with some ropes of the barge. He loved little Margot; he could feel now for his comrade as he had not felt in the years of their youth.

Tricotrin asked no more. He knew the comedian well, a lovely, heedless, heartless woman; full of laughter, of coquetry, of caprice; a soulless, brainless, beautiful thing; young still, fair still; with the beauty of the japonica or the azalea—beauty of hue and form, without a trace of the beauty that fragrance lends the flower and feeling lends the woman. Many a time had he seen the theater she graced convulsed with mirth at her gay and mischievous follies.

The story had a great pathos for him:—he who had seen the sparkling gayety of the wife felt the full force of the martyrdom of the husband. The cruelty and the crime had been rewarded by so shadowless a life of triumph,—the devotion and the fealty had been recompensed by so weary and endless an agony!

"Ah, Waif of mine!" he thought, "will you ever, I wonder, *destroy a brave heart* like that for the sake of *your senses and your vanity?*"

With sunrise the barge passed the village for which he was bound. He was pledged to the bridal feast of Yvon Mascarros, or his heart had inclined to follow the fortunes of that patient desolated life which had been ruined by a woman's infidelity. He went up to Bruno, and bade him gently farewell. The seaman lifted his head from the rough work on which his hands were engaged, and replied with mechanical courtesy; the momentary light and reason that the music had wakened there had died out from his features: the old, darkened, brooding, lifeless pain had gathered there again.

"There is nothing one can do him?" he asked of Caros.

The Marseillais shook his head.

"Neither God nor man can aid him. Who can give him back his wife, in her youth and without her crime?"

It was true. Solace for Bruno could only come with death.

Tricotrin watched him one moment more, sitting under the black shadow of the sail, with his fingers working at the cordage, and his eyes looking out at the sun, where it rose in all its glory. Then, with the hands of Caros grasping him in grateful farewell, and the bright face of little Margot looking, smiling and sunny, over the side of the barge, he dropped himself into his own little boat, and rowed himself straight across the stream to the landing-place. As he moored it to land, he paused a moment looking after the barge where it drifted slowly on down the river, with the glow of the sunrise, amber-hued and ruddy, on the waters around it.

"To have life killed in one at twenty-three by a woman! —and men call diseases that slay outright 'cruel,' while there are these blows which murder by means that draw out the torture through a quarter of a century. The plague is merciful compared with a woman without pity!" he thought as he watched the form of Bruno, dark and motionless, under the shadow of the sail.

That thing he himself had saved yonder, who was chasing the butterflies so joyously, with the sunshine on her fair brow, careless of the pain they felt—she, too, would soon be a woman. Had he rescued her from death *for her to deal* death, like this fond, faithless wanton

that the sailor had cherished? The thought came to him —well as he loved the child, well as all his years through he had loved her sex.

In some sense the weary, lonely, melancholy figure of the boatman, with his strong, massive frame that would not perish, and his jarred aching brain, to which death would have been so much mercy, stood out to him in painful contrast with his memory of the light, gracious, golden presence of the child, as he had left her among the scarlet flowers and the dewy leaves. These were both forms of the same human life!

But the thought was a bitter cucumber which Tricotrin threw away in obedience to his favorite Antoninus' counsel. He left the barge to pass on her way; and, after bathing in the river, walked through summer woods and green vineyards to the village of his destination, where, already in the early day, the peasantry were stirring, and the young girls and the children going out to gather wild lilies, and honeysuckles, and great branches of roses, to crown the head and strew the path of the prettiest among them, who was to wed with Yvon Mascarros.

And there, under the low eaves of the farrier's cottage, or under the blossoming boughs of the limes that sheltered the house, Tricotrin, with his mirth and his music, kept these innocent revelers gay from daybreak to nightfall,— gay with a zest they never had unless he were the Lord of Misrule. And the Loirois maidens, with their black laughing eyes, and their lithe robust forms, and their feet that flew like the flash of phosphoric insects, danced all through the sultry summer night to the same melodies, touched by the same hand which had awakened to momentary consciousness of its own agony the numbed and stricken heart of the boatman Bruno.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER the old sign of the *Cornemeuse* there was a gay after-midnight supper.

It was not the *Cornemeuse* of Dancourt, of Marivaux, of Piron. It was not the famous, well-beloved café of the poets, the artists, the epigrammatists of the eighteenth century; but it was a *Cornemeuse* as mirthful if not as traditional as theirs.

A bright, white-painted, gas-glittering little house, with gilded balconies and tri-colored flags, and tiny chambers, and open glass doors, with the perpetual color and movement of the Paris crowd under the trees before it, and the vivacious noise and music of a Paris night all around it. It was a resort of the bohemians,—of the painters, and the actors, and the rhymesters,—of those who make the laughter of the world, and of those who limn its manners for the age to come. Chiefly the artists came thither, and within the little building there was scarcely a single white panel, or a single piece of plaster, that was not covered with the charcoal or the chalk, the oil-color or the pen-and-ink of the master hands of France. The *Cornemeuse* had untold gold upon its walls; and the owner of it, a bright, hot-blooded man of the south, loved the pictured walls with all his soul, and had never sold a touch from his guests' brushes save once, when his daughter's dowry could not be found in any other wise, when he had taken down a shutter whose three panels were rich with three great masters' idle fancies, and had parted with it for its weight in francs. For half a century the *Cornemeuse* had thus gathered its wealth upon its walls and timbers; and among its treasures—the treasures its host valued most, though they were but the gifts of an amateur—were some half dozen female heads, with all the grace of Greuze and all the velvet hues of Boucher;—heads that looked *out in* charming coquetry from quaint dark corners, and

laughed down from window-nooks, wreathed with flowers,—heads under which the brush of their creator had scrawled carelessly, "Tricotrin."

"You could have beaten us all if you would," had said once to their artist a painter whose name stood as the Velasquez of his modern time.

"Possibly; but then Art would have been my tyrant, whereas she is now my handmaiden."

"And serves you well. Yet, if you had let her rule you entirely——"

"I should have been her slave. He is a fool who is subject to his mistress. Can he ever wholly enjoy her? I doubt it."

"But is it not waste of genius?"

The wanderer shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't say whether it is my weakness or my strength to hate the bondage of anything,—even of Art. I only say—it is my temper!"

"But if every man had such a temper?"

"Well, if every bird were a lark we should get no useful fowls for the stew; but I do not see that the utility of stews to eat proves any argument against the right of the larks to sing?"

And the man who loved song, and light, and green meadow lands, and blue sunny skies, like the larks themselves, had taken up his friend's palette and sheaf of brushes, and had dashed in, in two hours, a female head that had all the brown glow, the voluptuous luster of the south in it,—a head that Titian might have painted.

He would create such in the caprice of free impulse; but he would have produced them as a trade no more than his fellow-bohemians, the larks, will sing in cellars.

It might be strength. It might be weakness. But it was, as he said, his temper.

Beneath that same golden, ardent, beaming Hebe face that he had there sketched in oils on the panel, he sat among his brethren now at the supper of the *Cornemeuse*, with the light on the leonine beauty of his head, and in the sparkling laughter of his eyes. He was the king of the revelry; revelry of wit and wine, where those whom nature *had anointed with* the same chrism that touched

Rubens's brow and Shakspeare's lips, held joyous, lawless sovereignty; leaning to kiss ripe scarlet mouths of women because they were men, but rising to great thoughts that left far beneath them alike women and the world, because they were also immortals.

His laugh rang out, tuneful as the music of silver; his wit flashed through the speech like meteors through the night; his improvisations, full of irony, of raillery, of caricature, made the gay shouts of his listeners echo again and again. Ben Jonson odes, Beaumarchais rhymes, Béranger songs, and Breton carols, coursed each other off his lips, in a wild tournament of tongues; his own swift satires unhorsed all combatants, and as he drank he chanted Hellenic bacchanal hymns, with all the bright gay grace of Greece.

He would have lived as soon without light as without the freedom of unfettered mirth, the abandonment of unchained gayety, the debonnair enjoyment of the lord of misrule.

He loved pleasure; but he loathed debauch; when the former glided in its riot to the latter he left the *Cornemeuse*, as the morning dawn began to break, and went out into the air; the wine having only warmed all his poet's fancies, and only making richer and fuller still in its melody the ring of his voice as he walked through Paris, singing aloud the

> God Lyœus ever young,
> Ever honored, ever sung,

of the wine-mellowed Elizabethan verse.

Tricotrin knew how to enjoy. His censors—and he had many—said that he deemed this too exclusively the only aim of life. At the least his enjoyment was of that free, liberal, and gracious fashion which sheds its light on all around it, and is never cramped into egotism, nor distorted into orgy.

None the less either because he came freshly from the lavishness of mirth and the pleasures of the senses was he awake to all that is terrible, to all that is horrible in the shame, the crime, the hunger, the agony that were

hidden beneath the marvelous night-glitter of the city through which he went.

None the less because on his lips the carol was so mirthful of the

> "Stained with blood of lusty grapes
> In a thousand lusty shapes,
> Dance upon the mazer's brim,
> In the crimson liquor swim.
> From the plenteous hand divine,
> Let a river run with wine,
> God of youth!"

did he pause in pity at the sight of a wretched creature who begged his alms, though that pity was not heard in his first words.

"Charity?" quoth Tricotrin, to the appeal. "You ask for what men want, every one of them, but love little to give. Pass on, my friend"

"But bread—a morsel of bread at least?" moaned the man, who had stopped him in an obscure street, where there were few other passengers in the lateness of the night.

Tricotrin looked him through with his brilliant eyes by the light of the summer moon: he had no love for those who begged, and he knew thief from pauper at a glance.

"Off with you!" he said, amusedly. "If a man cannot get a bit of baked wheat for himself, in a world where there is so much to be done, he is not a fellow worth keeping in the world at all, to my fancy."

"It is hard to work!" muttered the other, who had the pure accent of education.

"Oh-hè! If everybody worked in moderation, nobody need overwork himself. It is because there are so many do-nothings—chiefly so many female drones—that those who do at all do overmuch. To say nothing, that the overseer of Greed drives his slaves at the devil's pace."

"But I am starving," moaned the beggar afresh. "And it is so bitter to die!"

"Not at all. Mere ignorant error. Hard to die? Is opium-sleep hard after racking pain? What fools men

are! Writhing in famine and disease, they think it hard to be released from both!"

"Ah, you have not felt hunger!"—the poor wretch was longing for mere food; to be epigrammatized by a stranger in the desolation of the streets, little appeased the terrible desire.

Tricotrin's eyes softened greatly.

"Have I not?" he said, with infinite gentleness. "You mistake, my friend."

"Then for heaven's sake give me bread!" said the man fiercely; for his growing need made him ferocious, like a desert beast.

"Tut! Say for humanity's sake. Well—I have not a sou on me. I have spent them all at the *Cornemeuse* yonder."

Cheated in his hope, the starving creature shrank back with a shrill yell of grief, like a struck dog's; the sound went to the heart of his hearer, and outbalanced the predisposition against him, which his voice and his features had aroused.

He struck the beggar kindly on the shoulder.

"Unphilosophic man! Blind yet to the advantages of death? Come then—follow me."

With his quick, light step, and resuming his chant—Beaumont and Fletcher—Tricotrin led the way, through many tortuous turnings, till he reached the quarter of St. Martin, the starving wretch following him in dumb quiescence, shivering, though the night was warm with all the balmy sweetness of a late French summer.

An impulse of trust had made him accost this stranger, so utterly unlike himself, who had so dauntless a carriage, and who had on his lips the carol of such careless revelry. All that evening and night through he had vainly sought pity from the crowds of Paris, from the beautiful painted women, the men of wealth, the creatures of delight, who swarmed there in such busy, heedless, glittering throngs; only this one man had given him what he sought.

Tricotrin let himself in with a pass-key into a house of the poor and crowded quarter, where he had fixed his dwelling for the time. He was never stationary, scarcely *for so much* as a week; he was yet freer and more com-

pletely unincumbered than the Arabs, for he had not even a tent to bear with him, but made his nest where he would, as fancy took him, like a yellow-hammer in a highway.

He wanted no home as he wanted no nation. Wherever men dwelt he found both.

He went up a high wooden rickety staircase, very high, for he always chose his room nearest the sky, and bade the beggar follow him into the topmost chamber.

It was a very large attic, for he could endure no cramped space; with bare floor and bare walls; Mistigri curled up on a little straw bed, and his Attavante and his Straduarius lying together on the deal table. It was perfectly comfortless; but he was never in it except for slumber, and through the open window there shone the sky, star-studded.

He wasted no time in words, but striking a light and going to a cupboard in the wall, drew out a great roll of bread, some cold meat, an apparatus for coffee making, and a flask of Burgundy, all he had in his possession. He set the food before the beggar; made some steaming coffee in five minutes; and poured him out as much wine as it was safe to give him after his long fast. The man devoured as only starvation can, and Tricotrin, turning his back on him to spare him a witness of his voracity, busied himself talking to Mistigri, where she had thrown herself down on the mattress.

Now and then he cast a look at his guest, and the survey did not please him. There was a wolfish keenness in the way he ate which was of itself repulsive; but it was less this, than the cast and expression of his features that displeased his host. He was very delicately made, and his face was of beautiful type, with the hair cut short over the brow, and falling longer behind; he was not young, but the face remained youthful, though its clear olive skin was livid, and the jet black curls had many threads of white. Handsome he was, handsome as an Antinous, but the beauty was crafty, feline, cowardly, full of latent lust and cruelty, though such as would have been dangerously comely to the eyes of sensual women.

Something *of remembrance* came to Tricotrin as he

watched him: but what the memory was he could not recall.

His meal over, the man thanked him with all the profusion of southern expletive, and all the grace of southern manner; there was that both in his speech and air which showed he had once been gently nurtured, though now fallen as low as this.

Tricotrin seated himself on the straw pallet, and listened silently; he was pondering what he could do for him; it was not his way to give men mere passing aid.

"No thanks," he said at last. "Sit down again a minute. I have done nothing for you. In Utopia there will be no want. But while we are as far from Utopia as we are now, we are bound to help one another. Tell me, my friend—what have you been?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing! The best thing if you are a philosopher, the worst if you are not."

"But 'Philosophy bakes no bread,' as Novalis has it," murmured the stranger, with a mirthless and bitter smile.

Tricotrin eyed him more closely.

"Well—I am not altogether sure of that. At the least she teaches us to be content, in default of bread, with a handful of pulse. That is better than to have discontent and dyspepsia after a banquet. But, you are a man of education. Did your sense never tell you that it does not do to be 'nothing,' unless one has a million to be it upon?"

"I suppose it should have told me so, but I thought each day that the morrow——"

"Cras vives; hodie jam vivere Postume, serum est. Ille sapit, quisquis, Postume, vixit heri," murmured Tricotrin; he who enjoyed existence with the versatility of a humorist, the richness of an artist, and the carelessness of a wanderer, felt as much contempt as pity for those who were ignorant of the true secret of happiness—living in the present.

"Martial might have remembered," said the sufferer, quickly, "that there are some people who never get a chance of 'living,' worth anything at all, either yesterday, to-day, or to-morrow."

"Humph! The wise man compels chance. However,

some want a good opportunity, as bad swimmers want an air belt. We will see if we cannot furnish you with one. But first be more explicit with me. What has been your career?"

The stranger hesitated.

"A checkered one," he said, bitterly. 'Now in sunshine, now in darkness. I have known what it is to be rich, successful, triumphant; I have known pleasure, and abundance, and women's loves. But—in a word—I have been a gamester; and the good fortune that crowned me so long has forsaken me for the last score of years, till—till—I have become what you see me!"

The tears stood in his eyes; he pitied himself with exceeding pity, and regarded his fate, as every gambler does, as the cruel result of a combination of cruel conspiracies.

"A gambler!" echoed Tricotrin. "How could you say you were nothing? You are of the trade that ruins more souls than any other, except the trade that women drive in love. A gambler! Bah! to peril all your brain, and your peace, and your future on the caprice of the turn of a wheel! Why, to pin them on the faith of a woman is not more foolish, and is far more poetic!"

"You are pleased to jest at my misery!" muttered the other, sullenly.

"Nay. I jest at no misery," said Tricotrin, earnestly. "God forbid! But if you have no other resource than play, it is difficult indeed to see how to aid you. Could I give you thousands they would all go in one night of hazard!"

"I used to have such luck! How could I tell that those devils of cards would only mock me as age came on me?"

The question was piteous and passionate—he deemed himself wronged as by some base treachery, by the change of the chance that used to smile on him.

Tricotrin looked at him in silence: his compassion for the evident wretchedness and dire want of the man restrained the scornful satire that rose to his lips on this folly of first trusting, and then recriminating, hazard.

"In what fashion would you most like me to aid you?'

he asked at length. "I am poor myself; yet I could put you in many ways of earning bread, if you were one of those who were willing to labor for it."

"You recommend labor—but you follow pleasure, I believe. That is a common anomaly!"

The ingratitude of the graceless retort to the one who had just succored him in starvation, grated on Tricotrin's ear; but he did not suffer it to influence him. This man was in necessity; in Tricotrin's catholic humanity that fact excused all bitterness in him.

"You judge of what you know nothing," he said, simply. "Pleasure is but labor to those who do not know also that labor in its turn is pleasure. But we have to do with your concerns, not with mine. Can you tell me more of your life,—though you have epitomized it in that one word, Play?"

"What use would it be?" moaned the other, wearily. "I have said, I had my enjoyments, my conquests, my indulgences years ago—years ago! Of late—for many a long day—I have done nothing save hang over the gaming-tables, on which I had often not even a coin to stake! I have been a fool—oh, yes! I know it as well as you can tell it me. And why? Because I had never the courage to be wicked *enough!* It is the man who is timorous in crime, who alone fails to make crime a fair mistress, and a good paymaster!"

As he uttered the one-sided warped truth, his delicate face worked and darkened with a spirit of evil which looked as though only the power, but never the will, had been lacking in him to give himself wholly over to sin.

Tricotrin saw that, but he passed over the speech without reply to it.

"What is your country?" he asked, simply.

"By birth I am Greek."

A darkness passed over his hearer's face.

"Slang has made Greek synonym for Cheat! Popular instincts rarely err. And you are 'noble' by birth too, I suppose?"

The stranger winced under the ironic and contemptuous intonation of the sentence. He made no answer;

feeling his host's lustrous eyes were fixed like an eagle's on him.

"Every Hellenic scoundrel is descended from the Pisistratidæ, or the Alcmœonidæ, if we believe his statement on the matter!" said Tricotrin, with the same disdainful accent in his phrase. "What may your name be?"

"Paulus Canaris."

"*What!*"

As the word leapt from his throat he leapt himself on to the Greek, with his hand on the weakly and subtle form, that writhed impotently in his grasp.

"Thief—traitor—hound!" he cried, with the intensity of passion reiterating through the words, while to and fro in his irresistible grasp he swung the stranger as easily as though he held a dog. Speechless, breathless, paralyzed, the man strove in vain to get free from this fiery and instant wrath, which had thus broken up from the genial and sunny mirth of the one who had fed him and succored him.

"What have I done?" he gasped. "Is this your hospitality?"

Struck by the last word as by a lash, Tricotrin loosed and shook him from him.

"You have broken my bread—you are sacred. But for that—by God!"—

The oath was stifled in his throat; breathing fast and loud, controlling with strong effort the passion which possessed him, he fell back from the gamester, with his back against the casement, seeking the air by instinct, as a hound after combat seeks water.

"What is my crime?" murmured the other, halting, panting, blanched with fear. "What do you know of me?"

"I know you—as the paramour of Estmere's wife!"

The Greek's features grew livid, and all his delicate limbs trembled as with palsy.

"Estmere! Who are *you* then?"

"No matter that! I know all your life; adulterer, liar, betrayer, thief!"

The furious words coursed swiftly on each other;

leaning back against the attic window, with his arms crossed on his chest as though to withhold himself from violence against the man made sacred by having eaten of his salt, Tricotrin stood gazing on him, with his eyes aflame like a lion's, and the night wind blowing his hair.

The Greek cowered under that look as under some physical torture; he had no conception of who the man was who thus arraigned him, he had no conception of why his wrath was thus aroused against the paramour of the wife of another, but he knew that the vileness of his own life had been seen by these eyes that pierced him with their accusation and their scorn.

"You use bitter words," he muttered at length, in the ague of fear. "Who are you—in God's name, who are you?"

"Blaspheme God, you who betrayed man!" cried Tricotrin, his passion once more striving for mastery. "No matter who I am—suffice it I am one who knows *you.* If you had not eaten of my bread I would choke your crimes down your throat with the vengeance on you that you merit. You are safe with me being under my roof, having sat at my board. But for that——"

He ceased; his breath came loud and hard, it went sore with him to let this man pass out in peace. But he would not break the bond that made the guest sacred to him, by the old grand law of nomad tribes; and he would not forswear his word. With a swift movement he turned, swept out the few gold coins his cupboard held, and threw them down at his debtor's feet, with a gesture of speechless scorn.

"I keep my promise even with things as vile as you. There is your 'chance.' Take it, and begone!"

The Greek cowered and shrank with shame, with terror, with repugnance. He hesitated an instant, the dire fear upon him conflicting with the lustful impulse for the gold, that moved him to take it even at this cost. For an instant even the debased nature of the man recoiled from accepting succor given thus. Then,—so low had he fallen,—he stooped, with a hurried, furtive action, caught the coins in the hollow of his hand, and slunk out in his ravening greed.

He was ashamed; but avarice conquered shame.

He went stealthily down the staircase, up which his preserver had so lately brought him, and out through the narrow door. The owner of the house was just up, in the dawn, and washing down his passages with broom and water, singing cheerily a rhythm of his old birth-country, Berri.

"Who lives in your fifth story?" the Greek whispered to him.

The gay, good-humored Berrois smiled.

"Ah, ha! The attic has a prince indeed! Do you not know him? Why, all Paris knows Tricotrin."

"Tricotrin!" murmured Paulus Canaris, as he slunk onward into the early daylight; the name told him nothing; he had never heard it. It increased his perplexity and his terror. He hastened to forget both in trying his "chance" at the nearest gambling den; but he registered the name in his memory.

When he was left alone, Tricotrin stood at the open window, his passion quivering still, hot and bitter, through his blood. It was rarely that rage or grief ever mastered the mellow, happy, and abundant life within him; but when he gave way to either, the emotion was terrible, the hour of his abandonment to it was very dark.

Forte è l'aceto di vin' dolce.

For a long time he stood there, combating the hatred and the remembrance that were so heavy on him. Then he shook himself, as lions shake their manes. The dew was wet on his forehead; his face was flushed red with the fury he had restrained; his chest heaved with quickened breaths. He stretched his hand out, and dashed to shivers the glass from which the Greek had drunk. As the pieces fell he smiled sadly, in rebuke of his own uncontrolled and boyish action.

"Mistigri," he murmured, "a philosopher should be as unmoved seeing his foes as his friends. A philosopher, decidedly, should not keep such a puerility as a Past. I am disgusted with myself, Mistigri. Scold, scold, if you like; that is a favorite way with your sex of showing sympathy: and I deserve it. Bah, Mistigri! even a philosopher is mortal when his personality is touched. I

should have been vile enough not to have given that man food if I had known whom it was that I fed. How contemptible that! A clear human duty broken for a private sentiment!"

Mistigri made a murmuring, affectionate noise, as though deprecatory of his self-condemnation, and comprehensive that Man was still too near his progenitor Monkey not to instinctively give blow for blow.

"Clearly contemptible, Mistigri!" continued her owner with a smile, for his moods passed as rapidly as April days from storm to sunshine. "Lacedemonian Charellus was perfectly right. 'By the gods, if I were not in wrath with you I would have you slain.' He knew how wrath obscures reason. Wise man! And we degenerate moderns allege our anger as the very motive to strike! Let us banish the dark spirit, Mistigri. It is the ruin of all peace, and the foe of all philosophy!"

And to banish it, Tricotrin took up his perpetual consolers,—his violin and his meerschaum, and smoking the one drew music from the other. Whenever his joyous serenity was broken he restored its peace by the same spell as gave back sanity to Philip of Spain and Saul to Israel.

When does the artist ever so wholly escape from the oppression of the world around him as when he enters the world of his own creation?

The music stole out from the open casement into the warm gray dawn; and as it floated downward and upward on the quiet air, it breathed its beauty out over the crowded roofs of Paris.

Homeless outcasts, wandering footsore, heard it, and turned backward from where their steps were leading them to the brink of the black river. Lost women, desperate because they could not glean the foul wages of sin, caught the sweet fugitive echoes, and thought with a pang of long dead days, when they had leaned, in innocence and infancy, against their mothers' knees. And one little child in the street below, thrust out to steal with brutal blows, and fearful of returning because his hands were empty, listened where he lay, upon a doorstep, naked, hungry, sobbing,—listened till he fell asleep, with a smile

upon his pale bruised lips, and dreamed of flowers and of sunlight, and of the pitying faces of angels.

Thus Tricotrin soothed other souls beside his own.

CHAPTER IX.

"GRAND'MÈRE!" cried Viva; "there is Sarazin! and he is going up to Villiers; and he says he will take us both there, if you will come; and we shall see all its glories; and he has a niece in the dairies, with whom we can stay and sup; and he will bring us back in the evening time. Say yes! oh, do say yes!"

It was very early morning. Grand'mère was boiling the breakfast coffee, and let the pot fall over on to the burning wood as she started and turned at the Waif's breathless and passionate exordium.

"Sarazin! Sarazin is a good creature, and it would be a pleasure for thee," she said, hesitatingly; "but then—Tricotrin?"

"Tricotrin!" cried Viva, with eager impatience. "Tricotrin says there is no better soul than Sarazin; and he always likes me to have pleasure,—you know that, grand'mère! And the sail there and back! and the sight of the château! Oh, come, come, come!"

"Call Sarazin in to breakfast, and I will talk with him," answered grand'mère, evasively, but knowing well in her heart that the child always got her own way.

Sarazin entered willingly. He was a little wizen, sunburnt, hardy creature, with a shell as tough as a cocoanut, and a temper as sweet as its milk. He was the only ferryman near for leagues, and was devoted to the service of Viva, who was as capricious and exacting as most fair mistresses are, and who owed the sunniest hours of her sunny life to him and his clumsy old boats.

One of the peasant proprietors had hired him to take up a load of wheat that had been purchased by the stewards of Villiers. He was to leave his grandson in charge

of the ferry, and himself conduct the corn barge to the great château: nothing loth, for it was rarely that he had a chance of quitting his lonely boathouse; and to go up to Villiers was a great event in the lives of the scattered river people of the neighboring hamlets.

Grand'mère, troubled with an indistinct remembrance that Tricotrin had once expressed a wish that Viva should never be taken thither, but unable to recall it plainly enough to be satisfied in opposing the child's entreaty, yielded with a certain disquietude, and locked up her dwelling, and went down the towing-path with a worried conviction that if she were not doing rightly he would hear of her action from the swallows that lived by the hundred under her eaves.

"Why do you always watch the birds so?" she had asked him one day.

"Because I have found out what François d'Assisse did not, that they can talk better to me than I to them. They tell and teach me many things, though the art of flying remains uncommunicated."

And grand'mère had received his speech literally; and had never since then seen the swallows fly in and out of their nests under the ivy without a certain awed conviction that they listened, and saw, and took tidings to their fellow wanderer.

"However, there can be no harm," she thought now; "the little one is with me and Sarazin."

The big brown sailing boat, with its load of corn, was ready; the horses of the wagon that had brought the wheat stood half asleep upon the shore, hock-deep in grass and rushes; the little quaint ferryboat peered out of a nest of vines and fruit-laden pear-trees, and tall leafy poplars. The whole was a lovely study of morning light and peaceful labor.

But Viva heeded little of that; rejoicing in it, after a vague, unconscious fashion, as a plant rejoices in sweet air, but never pausing to think of it with any poet's deep, inborn delight. This was not in her. She was too essentially feminine; too radiantly self-engrossed. What she thought of was, that the peasants who had brought the wheat, and the boys who were in the boat, and the very

ferry dog asleep in the sun, all gave her welcome because they found her fair.

Under the shadow flung by the sail, beneath the yellow pile of the corn, while the old woman sat knitting, and scarce looking up as the shores drifted by, Viva, lying full length on a plank, passed down the river,—slowly, dreamily, as before her Tricotrin had done on the hay-barge.

She loved nothing better than these long summer sails; and to her fancy, in that lustrous sunshine, the old boat became a gilded galley, the brown wheat golden treasures, the torn tarred sail a silken canopy, the gliding banks her kingdoms, and she a Cleopatra or a Catherine of Cyprus, sailing onward to land at the marble steps of matchless palaces. For she had the one enchanted power—Youth—with which the linen folds seem robes of purple, the chaplet of cowslips becomes a monarch's crown, the wooden bench is as an ivory throne of empire.

"She dreams,—that child!" murmured grand'mère to the ferry-keeper.

"The young always dream," answered Sarazin. "That is their kingdom of heaven."

"Whose end is hell!"

"Nay, not so. Look you, there are holy dreams, and they end mostly in the cloister; and there are happy dreams, and they mostly fold their wings in their husbands' chimney-corners; and there are——"

"Such dreams as hers," said grand'mère, with a motion of her head toward the child. "And they—if they do not end in an empress's diadem, which cannot be, people all say, out of fairy stories—*they* end in misery, and sin, and shame!"

Little Sarazin looked affrighted.

"What then?" he whispered; "you think the devil talks at that pretty rosy ear?"

Grand'mère shook her head in doubt.

"Sarazin, how that may be, I know not; but I do not think there is any cause for the devil to talk when a woman-child that is fair dreams of her own face."

"That is true," said Sarazin: and he went to the steering of his boat, while the old woman drooped her head

over her knitting; and Viva watched the gliding shores with eyes that only saw the dim and glorious shapes of some imagined future.

They had started so early that Villiers was reached by noon, for the tide served them, and the wind also. Sarazin went about his errand; but he first asked permission for the old dame and the child to wander through the park, and gardens, and building; and, since his niece had some favor in the household, obtained it.

Through the sunny alleys, the fragrant avenues, the sweet, still, orange-shaded ways, and the beds of gorgeous blossom, the little bent figure of grand'mère, in her white headgear and blue gown, with Viva's bright, gay, ever-moving form at her side, passed in the sultry August noon.

The voluble dairy-girl was their guide, chattering endlessly: but Viva paid no heed to her. She was absorbed in contemplation; in wonder as to the great man who dwelt here; and in fugitive fancies as to the possibilities of her own right to some such superb domain as this. "Estmere—Estmere—Estmere!" she repeated over and over again to herself. "Is he a king, I wonder?"

She had the haziest ideas as to ranks and habits. There were, to her own thinking, but two classes—the peasants, with whom she was assured she had no link in common; and the princes, with whom she was certain of affinity.

"Does it not make thee afraid?" whispered Sarazin's niece, in an awed whisper, as she led them through the splendors of the banqueting-hall.

Viva tossed back her sunlit head.

"Afraid! I am in my native air—that is all!"

The dairymaid, daughter of very poor and abject charcoal burners of the forest, looked at her and crossed herself; it was true, then, she thought, that this Waif of Tricotrin's came of no mortal mould. What Viva said was true: although she had never known but the simplest mode of existence, though her milk and bread had been served in a wooden bowl, and though her restless feet had danced over a bare brick floor ever since they had first danced at all, the child felt born to greatness: and things of beauty, luxury, or splendor always seemed

to her to belong to some native and beloved sphere from which she had been banished. There are daughters and sons of cotters who feel thus; and it is they who give the world its magnificent actresses, its merciless adventuresses, its heaven-born statesmen, its Russian Catherines, its victorious Rienzis. As likewise there are daughters and sons of monarchs that wear their purples in uncouth clumsiness, and cling to swinish tastes and ways, and look like boors amid their own court circles.

"*He* is not here? not the great lord?" she asked once, with a pang of disappointment.

"Silly one!" cried the dairy-girl. "Should *we* be in these rooms if he were?"

"Why not?" said Viva in haughty wrath. "He would let me be at the least: you should have seen how he bowed to me!"

And little by little she dropped aside and wandered away from grand'mère and Sarazin's niece: when she glanced at the great mirrors that they passed she saw how utterly unfitting to the place looked the little brown shriveled figure of the good old woman, and the plump, coarse form of the milkmaid, with their serge gowns, and their linen caps, and their heavy, wooden shoes; and she grew impatient and ashamed of her proximity to them. She liked best to roam through the château alone, and when she met any of the household, glide by them unseen; and so she got away by herself and strayed at ease, dreaming a thousand dreams through the halls, and chambers, and corridors of Villiers.

Once, twice, thrice, she noticed portraits of its owner; and stood before them with rapt, uplifted eyes and folded hands; his face had a strong fascination for her, but the chief spell of his power lay in the fact that he was the first "great prince" she had ever seen. For Viva, the offspring of hazard, who had no more ancestry than any blue cornflower that opened to the sun, and knew no more whence she came than any gold-spotted moth fluttering up in the starlight, was, by instinct, a passionate aristocrat; and adored what she did not possess with all the half-envious, half-generous obstinacy of a thoroughly feminine nature.

No one interfered with her: she went where she would; and, absorbed in her own thoughts, which were a curious, vague mixture of pain, pleasure, wonder, desire, irritation, and enjoyment, unanalyzed as a child's thoughts are, she never remembered that her "grand'mère" might be uneasy at her absence, or vexed by her abandonment. Things of Viva's type very seldom do think of others.

Straying about thus by herself, she came at last into the picture-galleries; she had an instinctive love of pictures, born partly of her passion for color, partly of her impulses toward graceful form and fair ideals.

Except the sketches of Tricotrin she had never seen any paintings save those in the nunnery-chapel; and hour after hour went by with her like enchantment in the presence of the Cuyps and Claudes, Salvators and Titians, Liberis and Van Horns. To the eyes of a young and imaginative creature the painter is as a magician, and each picture becomes a mirror of gramarye.

The works that appealed to the soul, the beatitudes and the martyrdoms of spiritual art, of divine aspiration, were dumb to her; but the works that were full of fragrance, of color, of splendor, of magnificent fancy, the works that appealed to the senses by the highest forms of sensuous beauty, filled her with a rapturous delight.

A tall, frail, white-haired old man, the custodian of the galleries, seeing her enter, watched her long himself unseen; it was so seldom that any footfall was heard in his solitude, that the presence of this vivacious, beautiful, unknown child was very welcome to him.

He approached her at last, and spoke: Viva, wakened out of her trance, and ever ready with speech, answered him gladly, and told him how she came thither, and all else that he chose to ask of her; while in turn she rained questions upon him. To these he replied cautiously: he was a devoted servant of the house, and there were things in their lord's life of which the servants never gossiped. But of the pictures he discoursed readily: and told her what she would of their histories.

Though gifted with the charming facile talents that
"nder culture, bewitching and brilliant women,
very ignorant: almost as ignorant in knowledge

as she was intelligent in perception, owing less to the nuns' mode of teaching than to her own radiant idleness, and her incurable hatred of trouble. The old custos was pleased to find a listener for his lore, and she was well amused with his stories: to the genealogies and histories of the works she lent indeed but a listless ear, to the anecdotes he told her of the portraits she gave an eager attention. Human life interested her more than any other thing: she had seen so few forms of it; it was environed to her sight with such magical mystery; and it lay in her hands like an unopened casket from which all the gifts of the gods would one day arise to her.

One portrait attracted her in especial.

It was the portrait of a boy, quite young, standing up to his knees in shallow water and flowering bulrushes, with a wounded water-bird in his hand. The singular charm of the picture lay in the union of his sunlit and fearless radiance of boyish beauty, and the tearful, tender, wistful compassion in his eyes as he regarded the stricken bird. She was of too heedless a temper to be very pitiful herself; yet the study moved her and riveted her gaze: it was life-size, the work of a great artist, and bore surety—which some portraits do even to those who know not their subjects—of being a faithful resemblance of the original it re-created.

"Who is that boy?" she asked softly, at length.

The old man sighed:

"One who died long ago."

"Died!—oh, he looks so full of life!"

"The brightest flowers are always the quickest to fade: how long the brown wallflower lives, but the purple convolvulus withers with its noon."

She was used to such fanciful speech, and it heightened her interest in the portrait.

"Will you tell me of him? was he well known to you?"

"Yes: long years ago, in another land than this. Move you into the shade—there, the sun falls still on *his* face. I will tell you the tale if you wish. There is no shame in it"

He stopped; there was one history in his lord's life that was dark with *shame*, a shame that every soul in his

great households had felt as their own dishonor when it had touched their master's name.

"Tell me!" cried Viva, happy in her new companion, eager for a new history, forgetful that the anxious heart of the old woman Virelois would be ere this palpitating in wonder and terror at her absence. "Tell me!" she cried, with her bright eyes fastened on the fair eyes of the boy.

And the old man told her:

"It was long ago that yon lad lived. I was young myself in those days. My lord—not this lord, but his father—was a wild and lawless man; proud beyond all, but given over to his passions, which were stronger yet than even his pride. He was always known as the Mad Earl. The world thought his madness surely proved when in his travels he wedded a fisher girl,—from the sea-cabins away to the west, there, by the Biscay Waters. I have heard that they are very proud also—those fishing people of the sands of Olonne; that she refused to him to be aught save his wife. But you know nothing of these things—I forget. Well, he brought her home; there were none to say him nay: she was a magnificent creature, daring, beautiful, free of limb, carrying herself like a fleet forest doe. But of course there was a strange difference betwixt her and the women of his own rank. She was as a wild mare of the desert, and they as the stalled, slender, pampered Spanish jennets, and the trammels of splendor were chains on her, and the tyranny of pomp was a curb that forever fretted and galled her.

"In her own national garb she looked an empress: but in a patrician's robes she was—a noble thing imprisoned, that made one ready to weep. She bore a son in the first year: and I think the only happy moments she knew grew out of the boy. For her husband, repenting his act, took a hatred to her; and he was passionate and hot and cruel, and would scourge her with many hard words of scorn. And that hatred for her spread to her son: he would scarce bear the sight of the child,—yet a nobler lad never breathed. The child loved his mother, the cruelty to her, though he was but an infant came to an end:—she died when he was only a

few years old, worn out by futile pain and loss of liberty, like a captive leopardess.

"My lord went into distant lands, and took another wife in her stead,—this time the daughter of a Russian prince; and when in time she also brought him a son his bitterness grew greater yet against his heir who had sprung from a race of French fishers. He would scarce ever see the boy; and never saw him without a mocking taunt or a brutal glance. But the two children grew up together with some seven years between them, and nothing could exceed the love in which they held each other. The difference of age only seemed to serve to draw them closer together. My lord and his wife were seldom with them; they lived in the great world, and the boys were left, with the care of able scholars, in the heart of the old Beaumanoir woods. Only, at such rare times as the castle was filled with guests, it was always the younger that was displayed and caressed and adored, the elder was almost banished. But no venom came between them; there was naught of the Cain in the one, there was generous childish love in the other. Lord Chanrellon—that was the heir's title—had much of his mother in him; he was too proud to complain, and he gave back scorn for scorn with his father. One day when he was fifteen,—he was younger when that picture you see there was painted,—my lord and he came in collision. The quarrel was brought about by a noble dog that the Earl commanded to be killed, under some specious pretext, but chiefly, it was well known, because Lord Chanrellon loved the poor brute. Wild words came on that score between them: Chanrellon was mad with rage and anguish, and said fiery and furious things in his dead mother's name; and my lord cursed him aloud, and prayed that he might be struck dead rather than ever enter into his heritage. It was an awful scene;—but the whole household were for the boy, and pitied him, and honored him only the more, for he was the beloved one of us all, and we knew that he was in the right, and mortally stung, and wounded, and incensed. Well,—the night of that day some rare jewels were missing:—they required to be reset, and had been left in a casket: great search and demand were made for

them: and my lord, blind with wine and with hate, charged his eldest-born with the theft of the diamonds. Ah!—if you had seen the lad's face in that hour! I never beheld a thing so beautiful! its unutterable scorn, its speechless amaze, its luminous truth and honor that any dolt must have read in its gaze! He never made answer to the foul foolish charge;—he only drew himself straight as an arrow, with his head proudly poised like a stag's, and looked his father hard and full in the eyes. Then without a word he passed from the chamber.

"It was near midnight then:—when the sun rose he was missing. We scoured park and forest and hamlet, we hunted through brake and plantation, we dragged water, and we loosed his own bloodhound out on the track. His young brother said that he had been wakened by Chanrellon leaning over him and kissing him on his mouth, and murmuring, 'You shall have it all, my darling—be brave and noble and true;' but he had been still half asleep, and had thought it only a dream. However, it had been no dream—it must have been a terrible truth. For toward eventide we raked up his cap entangled among the water-lilies on the moat, and a poacher crept forward and confessed that about the dawn he had heard a dull splash in the water and had stolen away—frightened, not daring to see what caused it. So then we knew he was dead:—and the young one grieved for him as a lamb for its mother."

The old man paused; his voice failed him; the time of his sorrow seemed fresh to him as that of a day just gone by, and his gaze was fixed on the fair tender face of the boy that looked down from above in the sunlight.

Viva listened; hushed and wondering.

"Why do you think that he died?" she asked at length.

"Why? why? Child! does not your own heart tell you?"

"But to leave such a splendid heritage?" she murmured.

"Well,—there are some to whom there is no heritage worth aught save their own stainless honor. Lord Chan-
was one of them. He had the sea-lion's blood

of his mother's race, and taunts had lashed that wild, brave, untamable blood into fury——"

Viva mused awhile wistfully; the history touched her, and yet she understood the impulse of the dead heir as little as young Pompeius, with his insatiate and dazzled vanity, could understand the supreme scorn and sacrifice, half contempt half generosity, of the Sullan renunciation.

"And you never knew more of his fate?" she whispered, with a certain sense of dread as the light died off from the portrait while a passing cloud swept over the sun.

"What more was there to know? We searched for his body; but we felt that the search was useless, for the moat was fed by subterranean waters whose channels ran deep, and passed out to the ocean. The child had been pierced to the quick by the scorn cast on his lost mother and the bitterness flung on himself. He had been falsely accused. To tempers like his there is no more unpardonable wound. He was ever impetuous and warm to passion, though those who knew him aright could lead him by his affections with a cord of silk. Well,—the Earl felt remorse, I know: he suffered keenly for awhile; but the boy that he loved was heir now, and this soon sufficed to console him. The lad himself—my present lord—felt far more enduring grief. For a long time he was as one who had lost all the treasure he owned. He had worshiped his elder brother: and the tragedy left its sorrow on him for so long that I think his nature never wholly recovered its elasticity; it made him grave beyond his years, though he was so young when it happened."

"Does he ever think of it now?"

"Ah! who can say? My lord is a great man, and lives in a great world. He may have utterly forgotten—I know not. For thirty years none have ever heard him allude to his dead half-brother. Men as high as he have fleeting memories. Yet—sometimes I fancy he remembers his playmate, for when he purchased this place and selected it as his favorite residence, he ordered this portrait among others to be brought hither. That would look as though all remembrance had not perished?—how-

ever, that also is many years ago now, and recollection withers under eminence."

"I saw him once, not long ago," whispered Viva, "and I thought that he looked like a sovereign."

"He is a great man," said the old servant briefly:—her sympathies were chiefly with the lofty and brilliant life whose power and strength and dominion allured her fancy: his were with the young, rash, noble life snapped in twain so early, like a young pine broken by the first autumnal storm.

He looked at her half curiously half angrily.

"You have not much heart, you fair thing!" he muttered as he moved away: Viva laughed a little to herself, —she remembered that the Count's daughter at the convent had said it was "provincial" to feel emotion, and she accepted his remark as a compliment to her own aristocracy.

The sun was still clouded, and there was a gray shadow lying across the face of the portrait, as she gave one lingering farewell glance to it, and fluttered on to gaze in entranced delight at the velvet beauties of Boucher, the pictured pageants of Versailles, the rose-wreathed laughing goddesses of Watteau.

The old man, disappointed, went back to his nook in one of the embayed casements, and bent afresh over a manuscript catalogue of his beloved collection, which had been a labor of love with him for many years; he took no more heed of her, but when later on she passed him with a gay farewell, flying with swift feet down the long galleries, he murmured after her:

"*You* will never harm yourself for another's sake, you handsome, wanton dragonfly, though many may suffer for yours, like enough!"

Viva did not hear: she was out of the picture-galleries and pursuing her adventures through the building, with her long, fair, tumbled hair flying behind her like a comet's golden train.

"Oh how foolish he must have been to have given up this!" she thought: the boy's face haunted her, but his [illegible]ailed to touch her because it seemed to her a mad[illegible]bsolute and so insensate to fling away such proud

inheritances for the mere sake of a stung honor and a dead mother's memory. She had been always caressed, indulged, adored; she had a charming innocent vanity that made any doubt of herself impossible; she was never wounded by any shame at her fate, because she was so perfectly assured that her birth must be royal at least, if not more than mortal. To comprehend the sensitive pride that had refused to accept honors begrudged; the fiery impulse that had refused to remain a burden to a race that had rejected his mother; the childlike chivalry of tenderness that had chosen rather to perish than live, barring out the brother he loved from his heritage; was impossible to her: their nobility, indeed, she saw; but what she felt far more clearly was their overwrought and headlong self-ruin.

She wandered on, through the reception-rooms and conservatories, as idly and as gayly as a bird wanders through a rosiery, and paused once more in breathless amaze of wondering delight in the midst of the tropical houses. She who had never beheld any flowers save the flowers of the field and the woods, had never seen aught in her dreams equal to these glorious blossoms of purple and scarlet and amber, these gigantic perfume-breathing lilies, these marvelous parasites with their net-work of color, these palms like the columns of some Solomon's Temple.

She was in perfect solitude: there was nothing living beside herself save the canaries and lovebirds and cockatoos that made their home amid the profuse vegetation. She sank down on the marble steps of the entrance, entranced; scarcely breathing, yet almost laughing with ecstasy. As the hues of the Bouchers and Watteaus had enchanted her eyes, so this wilderness of color, this delirium of perfume, intoxicated her senses. She clasped her hands above her head in rapture.

"Ah!" she cried aloud to the wandering birds; "ah, this must have been the world I belonged to!—this was the kingdom of my birth!"

To her it seemed far likelier that she had sprung from the violet chalice of some superb flower, such as those that hung by the thousand around her, than that anything

of want, of humiliation, of human care or human shame, should ever have weighed with her.

Her origin was a mystery; her existence was dependent upon charity; her only recollections were of the homely hearth of an old peasant woman: but this made no difference to Viva. She believed devoutly in the splendor of her own descent, and gazing down the maze of tropical color, and drawing in the delicious odors of the magic flowers, it seemed to her that she only revisited the place of her birth, that she only breathed the air that she had used to breathe in her native land.

And whether this was in truth the awakening of dim infant memories and associations long lost but unforgotten, or whether it was but the fancied glories of an imagination steeped in fairy lore and legendary fantasies, she never asked herself. To her own persuasion, lying on these marble steps, under these wondrous coils of blossom, she was like the slumbering princess of the enchanted forest, who waited for her coming hero, for the advent of her empire. And dreaming thus in the hot atmosphere, in the intense perfume, in the lulling of the fountains that played near, the sultry fragrance overcame her, her head sank down upon the marble, and she fell asleep.

Lying thus, canopied by the purple-flowering vine of the Pacific, with her flushed cheek on the white stone and her lips lightly parted, and the cambric of her boddice half open, showing the rise and fall of her snowy chest, a youth, coming in through the orangeries, saw her, and started and paused. He was a handsome boy, with brown delicate features, and dark slumbrous eyes, that lighted and smiled as they fell on her.

"A little peasant with a princess's face! Where can she come from, I wonder?" he thought, as he stooped down from the stair above her on which his steps had been arrested, and looked long and closely at her as she slept. He was moved and thrilled with her loveliness; but he did not hesitate to study it mercilessly in its unconsciousness: he only hesitated as to whether or no he ...ld waken her.

could learn who she was without her aid; and she raise some alarm if she were startled.

He guessed that she came from some one of the hamlets, and had strayed in thither, and fallen asleep through the heat of the day and the hot-houses. He bent down one moment, on an impulse to awaken her by kisses on her cheek; but some look on her face, even in its ignorance of slumber, repressed the impulse as it rose. He scarcely dared to adventure that mode of calling her back to the sentient world. He gazed at her long, and drew some of her curls through his hands. She was unlike any one of the peasant girls whom he had ever seen among the vineyards or on the river barges: he felt a difference that he could not have analyzed.

Then, moving very softly, he gathered some of the finest fruit from the grapes and oranges that hung above-head, laid them down on her blue kirtle without wakening her, and drawing off a ring from his hand, slipped it over a branch of yellow jasmine, and left it with the fruit on her lap. Then, laughing to himself, he moved away, and out of the tropical houses.

"The pretty fool will think they came from paradise!" he mused. "It will be the best mode to rouse her to interest: nothing allures a woman like a mystery! Who can she be? but that can soon be learned."

Viva slept on, unconscious of her gazer and her gifts. The day was far advanced when she awoke with a start, as a loriot flying past her brushed her forehead with his wing. Her eyes were barely opened ere she saw the fruit and flower and jewel on her lap; she gave a loud cry, half of terror, half of delight. By her they were believed to be as surely fallen from a supernatural hand as Dorothea's roses and apples which were sent from Eden to convince the scoffer and the skeptic.

The place filled her with a sudden affright. The birds seemed elves, the flowers seemed like glistening eyes. The odors and the heat stifled her; the cadence of the fountains sounded like fairies' music. She gathered all the presents up in her linen skirt, and fled headlong out from the winter-gardens, and under the colonnades of orangeries, and forth into the fresh air, hardly knowing what she did, but believing that she bore some fairy's treasures with her; *calling* aloud on Sarazin and grand'-

mère, and half delirious with the wonder of her own greatness, that thus marked her out for such especial favor from this elfin world which was unseen by common eyes.

She had some recollection of the way she had come from the out-houses where Sarazin's niece had her dwelling; and she rushed on and on, across the gardens, down the terraces, over the lawns, along the avenues, all on fire with her marvelous story, panting and thirsting to gain a listener. Instinct took her right, and she dashed headlong into the wide cool chamber, with its blue and white Dutch tiles, and its sweet, wholesome scent of cows and of milk, of thyme and of clover, where the dairy-women were clustered around the old Virelois who was sobbing and wringing her hands, and calling on the Virgin and Tricotrin to aid and forgive her, for she had lost the child.

Viva, utterly regardless of the woe that she had caused, bounded into their midst, and held the jasmine branch, with its yellow stars, before their astonished eyes.

"Grand'mère, grand'mère! Look here! You and I knew that I was not as others are. See what the fairies have sent me!"

The old woman, breaking from the circle of her sympathizers, threw her arms round her recovered treasure, scolding and caressing her, praising the saints and reproving the wanderer, all in one breath: but Viva shook aside her embrace with a certain impatience.

"I had a right to go where I chose!" she cried; "and look here! were not these well worth the straying for? Oh, you do not know what I have seen,—such things! such things! And I fell asleep at last in the temple of the flowers; and while I slept it was all changed, and every blossom turned into a fairy, and every bird into a wood-elf; and when I awoke there were these in my lap, and the magic ring hung on the great amber jasmine!'

Her audience were dumb with solemn amaze. Viva, unconscious of her own exaggeration, and working herself into the full credence that all had been as she told it, stood in their circle proud with all the pride of one selected by fate for an extraordinary distinction, and smiling on them with contemptuous benignity.

"Oh! you have never known such a wonder—you!" she said, with scorn at the mutterings of the awe-stricken dairy-women. "Of course you have not; one must be of that world ere one beholds it. Your cows chew the daisies and buttercups, only tasting in them food to make milk: but none the less do fairies and elves live under the grasses for those who have sight that can see them. Yes; it was all as I tell you. The place was full of a glory, and I heard the most exquisite music—so soft! so soft!—and you can feel the fruit, and smell it, and eat it, if you doubt; and you can take the jasmine in your hand, if you like, and watch the ring on it sparkle and flash!"

"It is very strange!" murmured Grand'mère anxiously, while among the women the myth soon grew into an article of faith, with the giant growth of any popular delusion; but they held aloof from touching either the fruit or the flower.

"You are afraid!" cried Viva, with more and more cruel disdain. "Do you suppose they would give what would hurt me?"—and she pressed a peach to her curling red lips.

Grand'mère caught her hand with a scream.

"Child! child! If the fruit be unholy!——"

"Pooh!" laughed Viva, setting her pearly teeth in the luscious, juicy pulp.

They watched her, expecting some horrible change; what they knew not: but all they saw was a child enjoying a fruit. Viva, however, had only done it out of bravado. She was not by any means secure herself that some extraordinary transformation might not take place in her, though she had too much of the Eve to resist the temptation of trying; and she felt a sense of relief that she would have scorned to have acknowledged when the peach was eaten down to its stone, and no awful results had ensued.

Encouraged by her exemption from evil, the women ventured at length to stretch timid hands out for the jasmine bough, and gaze at the ring that hung on it, and babble among themselves with voluble excitability. Grand'mère's face alone remained wistful and anxious, and her tongue was mute.

"It is truly a noble bauble," was all she said; "but how

canst thou tell, child, whether it will give thee pleasure or pain? It came to thee for an act of disobedience."

Viva, infuriated, and full of outraged dignity, seized the jasmine out of her hand, and went off by herself to a distant nook of the dairy, and began counting her grapes and her oranges.

"You are a set of senseless peasants!" she muttered the brown bright mouse-like eyes of the old woman were dimmed a moment with tears she would not shed; but Viva, engrossed in making the sunset rays play on her jewel, never saw that dumb reproach.

The milk-women were very angered, and called her a spoilt insolent baby, and jabbered hard things of her in under-tones, and began to believe all this magical story a lie. She cast one glance of supreme scorn upon them, then turned her back to them where she sat on her stool, and put the jasmine on her hair, and the ring on her finger.

There was a pleasant meal set ready in the dairy chamber, of honey, and cakes, and coffee, and hard eggs; a meal whose enjoyment her absence and the anxiety it had involved, had spoiled and postponed. Sarazin's niece came kindly though shyly to her and pressed her to join in it; Viva was extremely hungry, having eaten nothing since her forenoon bread and chestnuts in the boat, but she was too proud to deign to acknowledge it, and would have died of starvation rather than have shared in their supper. She shook her head in petulant negative: and sat alone eating her fairy grapes, which were delicious indeed, but unsatisfactory, save to her pride.

When the time came to leave the dairy-house for the boat, she vouchsafed them never a word, but swept out through the huge brass pans on the floor with the step of a young sovereign, and passed into the soft gray evening with the jasmine crown glittering like a wreath of golden stars upon her head.

"If that be how jewels change the temper, they must be the curse of the world," muttered grand'mère.

Viva heard: but she would not deign to reply.

"She is a vain wicked thing: she will bring the Virelois to shame," said one of the dairy-maids, standing with *arms akimbo, on* the lintel of the door.

"Do you believe in that story? She told it like the truth?" asked another.

"It may be; such things have been known," said a third, cautiously.

"But we have lived here all our lives, and never heard of the like at Villiers," responded the skeptic from the doorway. "If the young lord were here, I should say it was one of his tricks."

The conclave laughed, the suggestion was agreeable: to have traced an envied distinction to a fount of evil is the sweetest palliative to jealous mortification.

"She called us peasants," continued the cynic in the porch. "I had a good mind to tell her we were not bastards, but knew who our mothers and fathers were, which is much more than she can say, and I would have said it too, if it had not been for the poor old grand'mère,"—and she plucked a spray of honeysuckle from the outside wall and bit it spitefully, regretting her excess of good nature.

Over the broad green pastures that stretched around the dairies, two herdsmen came driving up some of the cows to their stalls, pretty smooth-hided lowing creatures, with sweet-toned bells that sounded pleasantly through the evening stillness. Both animals and men were well at Villiers; they were never overtasked, and they were ever gently treated.

"What news, friend Jourdan?" called out the girl from the doorway, to the cowherd nearer her. There was very little news at Villiers at such seasons as its lord was absent.

"Piffirie has foaled," said Jourdan, meaning a favorite farm mare.

"Ah, bah! And what else?"

"The mill people say their son has got a first-class medal at Paris for his painting. Thou rememberest him?—that idle simpleton who was forever chalking over the stable walls, and staring at dirt and stones and mosses?"

"A medal! And the fool could not drive a cow straight!" laughed the woman, with her hands in her side. "What else?"

"Nothing. Yes, wait,—the bull Georgeo broke his feeding tether, and led us a fine dance this morning; and they tell me the young seigneur has come back unexpectedly, and will stay here some weeks. He is in disgrace for some freak; so they say——"

And he passed on with his herd to the fresh-smelling, fresh-foddered stables away to the left.

The dairy-girl in the porch clapped her hands above her head, and shouted with gleeful triumph.

"I said if he only were back! Do ye hear, Paule, Claudine, Lisette? He is back! Ah, ha! So much for the tale of the fairies! so much for the worth of her truth! The ring, the ring! It is not a marriage ring, I guess—ha, ha!"

And she laughed till the rafters rang where she stood under the honeysuckles;—for jealousy is cruel as the grave.

The boat went home in silence. Sarazin was tired; grand'mère full of thought; the child's heart swelled with rage and pride where she sat with her hands full of the magic fruits, and her eyes watching the star-rays play on the jewel she wore. Save their good nights, none of them spoke a word.

The dog barked, the white cat purred, even Roi Doré woke on his perch to crow a welcome; Viva took no notice of any one of them. Was she who came back dowered with elfin gifts to heed such common sounds?

Moreover, she was not quite at ease with herself. And one must be very much at one's ease to enjoy such tender, homely, innocent things as these.

Grand'mère got some bread and some honeycomb and some milk, and brought them to her in silence; but Viva left the food almost untasted, though she needed it: she knew she had been wrong. They went up stairs in the clear moonlight, needing no other light, and the child undressed herself slowly, with the moonbeams falling about her fair round limbs, and shining shower of hair.

The Virelois, still in silence, opened her book of hours and read—knowing the words by heart, and forgetting to over the pages.

ddenly Viva sprang to her, and threw her arms about

"Grand'mère, I was wicked! I am sorry!"

The old woman's firm lips quivered.

"That is enough," she said, softly; then she laid her hands on the girl's shoulders, and held them there, looking straight down into her face as she knelt.

"That was a true tale you told us this day?"

Viva's eyes met hers full and fearlessly.

"Quite true, grand'mère."

"It is strange!" murmured grand'mère: then she stooped and kissed the Waif's flushed, wondering, eager face.

"The saints take thee in their holy keeping! Go—say thy prayers."

CHAPTER X.

VIVA, two days later, was lying wide awake in her little white nest, under the eaves, while still the first tittering of her friends, the swallows among the ivy, was the only sound of the coming day, and Roi Doré, in the shed hard by, was giving his first challenge to the yet unrisen sun. Her heart was in a tumult of glad excitation: for the first time the romance, befitting such a fairy princess as she, had touched her life: for the first time those long-careless elfin ancestors of hers had bethought them of her, and had sent her a visitant from their immortal home. The first page of that bright-sealed book of Færie, which she called her Future, had been opened to her gaze; the charmed reading of the mystic volume had commenced. A terrible loss had come to her, which wore to her enchanted eyes the brilliancy of an immeasurable gain: her childhood had gone forever.

Viva, lying awake there in the dullness of the dawn, was dreaming of the wonderful things that had glorified the days gone by; decidedly those fairy progenitors had remembered her, and sent her a Fairy Prince at last!

It had happened in this wise:

The previous morning had been very hot—hot to tropical fervor, *even in the cool old* convent gardens, with their

deep lush grass, their silent darkened flower-filled ways, their noiseless air syringa-scented, and moved by the silent wings of countless birds.

The child had been in some disgrace, and given a Latin canticle to learn; and, banished into solitude, had learned her task with random quickness, knowing nothing of its meaning, and then resigned herself to indolent delight, lying half covered with the thyme and plumes of spear-grass, and doing nothing in sublime content. Hours had drifted over her uncounted, when the boughs above her bent, their leafage rustled, and close beside her dropped —a Fairy Prince, as Viva instantly concluded,—a youth of two and twenty years, or somewhat more; dressed in dark velvet, like an old picture, delicate, gracious, very fair to look at, and with a voice like music. He had let himself fall from the convent wall—climbed by the ivy's aid—and for the first time in her life, Viva, long caressed by the voices of honest affection, heard the dangerous voice of adulation.

The innocent but supreme vanity of the child made her, though startled, amazed, perplexed, and a little frightened, quickly grasp the flattering truth that it was her own loveliness—seen on the highway road he told her—which had incited him to this adventurous experiment; and her visitant commanded a soft, sweet eloquence that won its way at once to her hearing. She did not comprehend one-half that he said, nothing that he implied; but she knew the one fact: that he thought her very beautiful—and was too well content with it to refuse to hear him ring the changes on it.

Nature had planted in her an innate coquetry, as thoroughly instinctive as a bird's flying, and the instinct moved her now without her knowing it. Flushed, startled, infinitely fair, half risen from her bed of fragrant grasses, she gazed at her young adorer, and listened breathless to his utterances; but the coy, proud, arch, malicious, feminine nature in her, taught her to parry his words, and play with his worship, in an impulse to defend herself and torment him, that astonished one who had ught to find her some shy, simple, pretty idiot of the ntry.

Viva—by nature wholly free from shyness, and proud of herself from her conviction of her lofty birth—thought nothing more charming than such an interruption of the too even tenor of her days; all the more charming because of the atrocious crime the stranger's presence formed against all the laws of her detested foes, the nuns. She was perfectly aware that she was sinning against all their rules in not fleeing instantly from this intruder; but the rebellion was just what she enjoyed. His oratory was most silvery sweet on her ear, for it told her only of herself; and, half willing, half reluctant, she listened.

It was just what suited that old, shadowy, luscious-scented garden, and such an enchanted princess as herself, to be thus beset under the mulberry shadows by such a wooer!

Of love, in men's and women's meaning, the Fille des Fées had no conception; this was only worship, she thought, such as in her fairy stories the captured Prince always gave the sovereign Beauty. The youth was facile of tongue; in very brief space he had filled her brain with intoxicating images of herself, learned all she had to tell of her short history, and conjured up before her magnificent visions of the world from which she was shut out; he might have progressed yet further, but that the voice of Sœur Séraphine calling for Viva and the Latin canticle interrupted his success. Not caring to be caught in that rookery of women, the young stranger murmured his hurried and tender farewell, swung himself lightly by branch and ivy coil up the steep wall, and disappeared, leaving her in a tumult of excitement, which sent her with scarlet cheeks and dancing eyes to the call of Sœur Séraphine, and reduced all memory of the canticle to chaos.

She awoke the next morning, feverish with wonder and expectation; he had begged her to meet him at the beech-tree, and had promised to tell her of a thousand marvelous things. She had told grand'mère, and grand'mère had not been as pleased as she had anticipated; grand'mère had not taken her view of the stranger; grand'mère had scornfully suggested that if he were a fairy prince he would not be under the necessity of climbing earthly

walls; grand'mère had finally stated that it must have been he who had had to do with the ring up at Villiers, and declared that she thought Tricotrin would not like her to go to the beech-tree. Whereupon Viva, self-willed, but frank as the day, had declared that she would go, that nothing should prevent, and had been fiery, and wayward, and, as she well knew, naughty. She had gone to bed with naughtiness in her soul, and awoke with it.

When she threw open her little lattice, close under its sill, where a robin's nest had been made in the spring, and was still there though the young redbreasts had all flown, there gleamed something of all colors with a shimmer of gold and of silver. It lay on the nest; trembling with delight she drew it up through the casement; it was a collar of exquisite workmanship wreathed with forget-me-nots in turquoises and opals—ten thousand times more beautiful than the silver wreath of that odious Adèle!

With the self-same action as poor Gretchen's, Viva, laughing, and almost crying with joy, clasped the lovely thing round her own white throat, and gazed enraptured at her own reflection in her tiny glass, and rushed down stairs to where the old woman was busied with the breakfast-coffee!

"Grand'mère! grand'mère! Look! Was he not a fairy prince after all?"

Grand'mère looked, and, to Viva's amazement, seemed troubled; even while woman-like she marveled at the beauty of the toy.

"The only fairy prince the world holds—a rich man,' she muttered. "Your throat is more graceful without it, my little one!"

"Grand'mère!" cried Viva, in supreme scorn, "that is because I am dressed like a child—like a peasant! If you saw me with silks and laces and all that one ought to have!"

"Ought to have!" murmured the old woman as she set down the brown rolls and the steaming milk. "There is no one from whom you could claim even *these* as your right, Viva."

Viva did not hear the rebuke; she was standing in

ecstasy before a great burnished copper caldron that served as a mirror, watching the sunshine play on her necklace. Grand'mère was very silent during the breakfast, though her cheerful loquacious tongue was generally never still over her coffee. Viva was silent, too, angered that her splendid possession had not met with more enthusiasm. Already the jewels on her throat had cast a shadow on her young soul; they were so costly and so brilliant that all the dear familiar things of her home—even grand'mère's brown face in its frame of white linen—looked common and unwelcome.

"You will go to the beech-tree?" asked the old woman.

The child tossed her spirited head.

"Of course! I said so!"

But when Viva came in the late afternoon to her tryst, under the beech boughs, knitting her scarlet worsted, sat grand'mère.

Viva could have cried, and her prince, when he came also, could have cursed, with vexation. But he was not so frank as the Waif; he showed no displeasure; on the contrary he talked so softly and charmingly, showed so graceful a respect toward the old age of the Virelois, and evinced such interest in all he had heard of Tricotrin, that even grand'mère's prejudices began to dissolve.

"She is so lovely; she is fit to be a princess in earnest, the little angel!" thought the latter. "The young man speaks well—he has a fair face—who knows? . . . . . "

And her thoughts drifted on building castles almost as aerial and baseless as Viva's.

He, when he left them and sauntered away to where his servants and horses waited in the shadow, mused to himself:

"The old fool will give me more trouble than the young one. But the child is so handsome—I never met with her rival—she will be worth some patience and some strategy!"

For the boy, with his delicate face and his tender voice, was at heart the coldest of sensualists; and youth is not seldom the most cruel of egotists.

"Is he not a prince now, grand'mère?" laughed Viva, in triumph. The old woman mused.

"He is well spoken," she cried, cautiously. "But I misdoubt if Tricotrin will wish you to keep that pretty toy; and,—do you like this one as well as that great lord of Villiers that you told me about?"

"Oh, no!" cried Viva, fervently, careless of how her confession hurt her present hero. "*He* looked like a king, a Charlemagne, or a David, or an Arthur, you know. This one is only like a Prince Fainéant!"

And she laughed mischievously at her own merry conceit. She was delighted that "this one" should worship her, but she had no inclination to worship him.

"It is dangerous," thought the old woman, anxiously. "Ah, if Tricotrin were only a man in a house, like a Christian, instead of always wandering, wandering, wandering, like a gipsy, one could let him know, and he would come. Le Curé would write for me. But he is like the wind, going all over the earth, no one knows why or whither. Well! the good saints have her in her keeping;—though to be sure one does not know whether she was ever baptized, which may make them indifferent. But I do not think they would forsake an innocent child for that; and Tricotrin is a sorcerer, he will come if any real peril touches her."

So she comforted herself with the remembrance of the occult powers of Viva's guardian, and did not try to discover who the young man was, lest she should find him of a rank that would dazzle with still more fatal effect the opulence-seeking eyes of the ambitious Waif.

To the best of her power the good old creature tried to screen the child from the sight or approach of this dangerous stranger. But the resources that riches command, and the subtilty of such love as the young voluptuary conceived for the "Light of the Loire," were more than a match for the Virelois' honest and simple en-

made no more trysts since Viva so innocently re-
them, but over and over again he waylaid her,
woods, on the high-road, at the ferry, or in the
garden when she was condemned to solitude for

inattention or insolence; and such faults were now more common than ever. Viva was of necessity often alone; and he had many opportunities to gain her ear. He filled it with many hyperboles about her own loveliness, with many asseverations of his own homage to it, and with what was yet more alluring to her, many pictures of the "world" for which she longed. Cities of Italy all glowing with flowers and wild with festivals; masked balls all a-glitter with rich hues and shining jewels; summer-fêtes with the toy-boats drifting on summer-lakes to palace-steps hidden in myrtle and oranges; Paris itself in its nights of rejoicing, with the churches all domes of sparkling fire, and each street a stream of laughing life—all these he painted to Viva, and, relying on the child's absolute ignorance, promised her deathless roses, royal power, every manner of glory and delight, if she would go thither with him. But Viva resisted this: she would have dearly liked it she told him for sake of all those wonderful things which he promised her. But then—Tricotrin, grand'mère, Roi Doré, Bébeé, all that there were to leave!

He could not make her reconciled to flight from them all; and he soon found that in her love for Tricotrin, whom he held in light scorn never having seen, as some vagabond scoundrel—lay the stoutest foe he had to encounter. Without this he might easily have lured her to her own ruin by those chief agents of her sex's destruction, vanity and the desire of wealth. It was in her love for her protector that lay the only shield she had, unconscious as she was of her own danger. It was in vain that her wooer promised to acquaint Tricotrin of her presence in Paris if she once would but go there; Viva would shake her head and ask him mournfully how could he do that when no one knew where Tricotrin lived? It was no less in vain that he strove to persuade her that Tricotrin could not be angered, but would rather be pleased that she should have any pleasure. Her heart was too loyal to her only friend to let her be induced to go from the home that he gave her, unknown to him. Moreover, Viva was rather deterred by her consciousness that grand'mère did not approve of the stranger, or of his jeweled toys, or of any part of the business; and the

disapproval of the good indulgent old woman was so rare on any project of the child's whom she loved so well that it had a weight with Viva that none of the sermons of those Sisters, who were always scolding her, would have possessed. Her young suitor was irritated at the slow progress he made, he was used to conquer quickly, and the unforeseen difficulty he had here piqued his pride and his self-admiration.

"We must come to a climax," he thought one evening as he sauntered to meet her. "It is no use playing the Faust any longer for nothing; and if ever there were a Gretchen whom jewels will tempt and console it is this little vain ignoramus!"

As he mused he came near her; standing beside a water-spring with the jug she had come to fill hanging empty in her hand, while she dreamed of—not himself, though he flattered himself that she did so—but of her own perfections as he had mirrored them to her.

They were young; but both their loves were as egotistic and as insincere as though they were two subtle courtiers playing at sentiment for the sake of intrigue. It is not always in youth that the loves are the strongest and purest. The insincerity and the egotism were unconscious in her, in him they were part of his system; but with both they were there.

"Viva!" he whispered as he stole behind her. "That is too much Cinderella's work for my Princess!"

The poor little princess colored angrily: she was only too quick herself to disdain useful errands.

"Grand'mère is old, and the water is far to fetch," she said, hurriedly, apologizing for doing what duty, and affection, and veneration for age alike demanded. So soon had the poison he had sown borne fruit.

"You can do these things and look a princess still!" he murmured. "Still, I would see you where slaves should obey your slightest word."

"Yes!" sighed Viva.

He always spoke in hyperbole to her, and the child's imagination was intoxicated by it.

"Well! Come, then! I must leave your province with to-morrow."

"Leave it!"

She turned a little pale, and looked up startled: she was not prepared to lose this generous eloquent visitant, who had come to break, with the charm of so much mystery, the too tranquil tenor of her days.

"Leave it? Yes. Will you regret me?"

"Oh indeed! I should miss you so much!"

Her face grew very sad and earnest. She felt her lips quiver a little. She did not like to think her fairy-story was going thus soon to be broken off without any more wonder-flowers blooming for her.

"Then you love me, my fairest?"

"I try to do so, monsieur," said Viva, softly.

It was the truth; she did try. She thought he deserved her love, he was so good to her; but, in real fact, she did not give him quite so much genuine fondness as she gave Roi Doré. He bit his lip with irritation; he knew the total absence of love that spoke in the answer. Still, the chagrin and the mortification only made him more resolute in pursuit.

"All I dare hope is to make you love me one day!" he murmured caressingly. "To be loved as I love were too much to desire; but, if you would but trust yourself to me it should go hard but I would win your heart. Come! Come to that world I have so often painted to you. Come —to be its idol, its empress, its treasure!"

"I should dearly love it!" sighed Viva, wistfully; "but——"

"There is no 'but,'" murmured her tempter. "How lost you are here! A ferryman, a swineherd, a postillion by hazard, the only creatures that see what a king must adore! If this man whom you speak of cared really for you, would he keep you in poverty and obscurity thus? Come with me, my fairest. You shall be queen of Paris, I swear to you!"

The child sighed again. Her cheeks were burning, her eyes glittering, her whole soul intoxicated. Was he a prince of France? she thought. Why not? And then to refuse him when he was willing to take her to share all his glories!

His arm stole round her, lightly brushing the hanging *profusion of her fair curls.*

"Come! come! to have France for your sovereignty, and all men who look once in your beautiful eyes for your slaves!"

Viva glanced up, half vaguely terrified, but still in a trance of incredulous and dream-like rapture. With the next moment she might have said yes,—she might have rushed to her own ruin, blind with the longing for change and for power,—she might have fallen headlong into the abyss opened beneath her;—but one word was her savior.

That word was;—"Viva!"

Under the trees stood Tricotrin.

With a bound like a deer's she sprang to him. Her young lover stood, sorely discomfited, gazing in blank amazement, in bitter annoyance, at this man of whom he had heard so much, and whom he had never seen; who came so unwelcomely, in so untimely a moment, between him and his prey. Tricotrin's bright eyes swept over him, and a great wrath gleamed in them; but he stroked the girl's hair caressingly.

"Who is your friend, Viva?"

"A stranger; a prince, I think!" she whispered eagerly. "And he has given me beautiful toys, all covered with jewels, lovelier than the gold things they have on the altar; and he says if I will go with him he will show me Paris *en fête*, and give me roses that will never die, and diamonds, and riches, and the life of an empress! May I go? and will you go too? and we can make grand'mère so happy! And he says that kings' daughters will not be noticed when *I* pass through the streets!"

The breathless words, poured out in all their childish mingling of selfishness and generosity, of innocence and vanity;—Tricotrin listened, then laid his hand gently on her shoulder:

"Go to grand'mère, Viva. I will talk with this good friend of yours, and hear a little of all these wonderful things to which he invites us. Do as I tell you, my child. You shall not lose the deathless roses by obedience."

Viva looked at them alternately a little wistfully; she was loth to go.

"He has been so kind!" she murmured softly; "and I *like to go*, if I may!"

Then she obeyed, and passed from them toward the cottage, her head turning still wistfully back to them, with the empty jug still hanging in her hand, her errand to the water-spout forgotten.

Tricotrin stood in silence, waiting till she should be beyond hearing. The youth stood his ground, too proud to turn away, but livid with chagrin, rage, and mortification; marveling also at the aspect of the man who had come thus between him and his soul's desire. He had thought with light contempt of the wanderer, whom the old peasant deified and the child adored, as of some poverty-stricken, folly-steeped vagabond; some strolling musician, since they spoke of his art; some half-outlawed eccentric, whom he could quiet with coin. He was bewildered at the royal and splendid beauty, the careless, fearless bearing, the magnificent manhood of this bohemian who stood before him in the linen blouse of the people, and with a little black monkey peering, witch-like, from over his shoulder.

Viva once out of sight, Tricotrin swung round, his eyes like blue lightning in their wrath.

"So, Lord Chanrillon! this is the thief's work in which you spend your villegiatura!"

The young man looked at him in silence, startled into speechless amazement at the sound of the name that he bore, a name he had carefully concealed through the whole of the siege he had laid to Viva. He recovered himself with an effort.

"Since you know my title," he said, with chill languor, "you know also the respect due to it. Know still further that I have no wish to parley with you on any subject."

"That I will warrant you have not! But your wishes are not what I shall consult. Do you know that I could kill you where you stand just as easily as I could break that slender sapling asunder; and,—by God!—I have a mind to do it, too, you beardless libertine, you smiling sensualist!"

His height towered above the young man's slight stature; his voice rolled out in sonorous passion; his chest heaved with his quickened breathing. A momentary horror seized his hearer, who shrank back with an involun-

untary impulse, while his clear, brown cheek turned white like a fainting woman's. Who could tell, he thought, what the vengeance of this lawless republican might be?

Tricotrin saw the fear of him, and laughed bitterly in his wrath.

"Pshaw, child! Men do not kill such things as you, though it is dangerous to spare adders because they look so small; a wound unto death is one's common reward for the misplaced compassion! Well, what plea do you raise in defense of your villainy?"

The youth laughed coldly and scornfully.

"I am not accustomed to raise pleas for my actions; still less should I do so to an inferior. If I needed one, however, the easiest would be found in the overtures that were made to me by your——"

The lie faltered and died unfinished on his tongue. He knew that as little might a lion be enraged with impunity as this man be goaded with safety. He replaced his falsehood with a scoff.

"Pardon me! I can understand your annoyance. The annoyance of losing the one ewe lamb! But, if I remember the Bible story aright, the ewe lamb went with much eagerness to the sacrifice. Your Viva does not differ from Bathsheba! Besides, I mean very well by her. The charming little fool is wholly lost here."

Tricotrin's hands fell on his shoulders, and shook him to and fro, as the jaws of a lion can shake what they seize but forbear to destroy.

"Another word like these and I will fling you out into that water, to sink or swim as you may!"

The youth freed himself from the grasp with difficulty, growing pale with rage and fear.

"It would do you too much honor to resent your outrage myself," he said insolently; "I will send my grooms to the task."

Tricotrin, even in the tempest of his wrath, laughed at the threat with his old ironic amusement.

"You will? Indeed! It will be a mistake—for your grooms! For the rest, my lord, as you term your—"

cline any more speech with you!"

"Pshaw! You will listen as long as I choose," answered Tricotrin, with contemptuous command. "Honor you have none; good faith you have none; but your father has both. If you do not swear that from this hour Viva is free from your vile temptations, and keep your oath to the letter, Estmere shall learn what the heir to his name can become!"

The young man broke in on the words with a laugh of insolent ridicule.

"The earl will not aid you much! He and I are very distant acquaintances. Besides, Estmere has quite youth enough in him to be no saint himself."

A darker storm swept over Tricotrin's face.

"Europe reveres your father; cannot you do so much?" he said sternly. "That you please him ill, I doubt not. Eustace Estmere is a gentleman, a just man, an upright man, a man of noble temper and pure honor. You must degrade him bitterly—you!—the son of such a mother!"

The young man's feature's flushed duskily with a flush of shame, even while absolute amaze possessed and held him silent.

Tricotrin's eyes softened a little as he saw that reddened, painful shadow on the insolent young face before him.

"I would not have taunted you by your mother's dishonor if you had not sought to lure a creature, innocent as the very doves, into dishonored life," he said gravely. "But,—you make me doubt, you make me disbelieve that you can come of Estmere's race."

"Estmere!" echoed his hearer, in bitter impatience of his father's name; "Estmere! You prate of Estmere! What can he be to you?"

"What he is to all the world,—what his son will never be—a gentleman! He bears you no love, my young sir. You outrage, offend. incense him at every turn and every phase of your worthless life. What mercy do you think he will show you if I tell him of some of your pastimes, of some of your vices? of your fashion of spending the last night of April, in Paris, this very year?"

The youth started and grew deadly pale.

"Good God! What are you?" he muttered. "Devil, or sorcerer, that you know these things?"

"One needs to be neither to know how you steep yourself in the foulness of orgies that many a debauchee would recoil from in disgust!" answered Tricotrin with the sonorous force of his voice ringing loud in disdain. "Pshaw, boy! Do you think I cannot tell the truth of even such pitiful things as your valueless years? I know the shame of your vices—of your crimes—my young Commodus. Your father does not: well for you that that eagle soars far too high to see where you riot with the carrion birds! Your mother lay in his bosom to rend his great heart with her treacherous talons; you, fit son of the traitress, claim his race and his name to sully them both and drag both through the mud of the foulest of license! He cannot tear his name from you; he cannot rescue his race from your mother's pollution of it; he cannot prevent your present rank or your future succession. But you know what he is,—you know how he can judge and how he can punish,—now,—shall he hear the whole vile truth of his heir's brutal orgies? Or will you purchase my silence by leaving in peace what I cherish?"

Viva's lover stood irresolute, pale, tremulous with rage, with wonder, with baffled hatred, with ignominious submission. Above all the contesting emotions which shattered his insolence and broke asunder his self-control, was one supreme all-absorbing amaze at this man who arraigned him with the authority of a king, with the disdain of a superior, with the omniscience of a god!

Even in that moment of humiliation and powerless passion, a curious dreamy speculation came on him, and made him wonder how, if such men as these were the people, it arrived that the people did not govern and rule?

"Choose!" said Tricotrin simply. "Do I know too much of you for you to oppose my will any longer? Or must I take sharper means to protect what is innocent from your toils!"

He did not answer: he was irresolute. A galled pride, a stinging fury, combated with him the impulse of prudential fear. He loathed to bend and surrender; yet

he dared not provoke vengeance from one who knew his worst secrets.

"Choose!" said Tricotrin with fiery impatience. "No matter to me the choice that you make! Do you renounce your pursuit?—or do I go to Estmere?"

"Were either Estmere or you such anchorites in your youth?"

The mortified pride, the ignoble fear of the young man's heart took refuge in a feeble taunt and evasion.

Tricotrin smiled contemptuously.

"Neither of us. Think you that I blame a boy's ardent follies?—a young man's lawless loves? Think you I do not know how sweet women's lips are in our youth, and how hard to resist the soft glance of their eyes? I make excuse for the swift unthinking sins of young years; I can pardon error where warm passion blinds conscience and tempts all the senses. But that is not your crime. You,—cool, cold, and wary; not loving, only desiring; not seeking a heart to beat echo to yours; but only seeking new prey to first seize, then throw away;—you,—weave lie on lie to trap a child in her ignorance, you—with all a boy's cruelty have all the graybeard's slow science, you—are a traitor, a thief, and a liar!"

The young man, stung beyond endurance, sprang on him to strike a blow for each word; Tricotrin caught his arm and held it there, the arm uplifted, the blow unstruck.

"I like you better for that," he said briefly. "There is some touch of the old race in you, though very little. But it is hardly worth while to resent what is true. It were better to admit it with apology and remorse. Now—make your choice. Leave France for a year on any pretext you will;—or stay and see what your father says of the things I can tell him. It is no matter to me which you select. Either course will equally serve me."

With that he loosened his hold on the boy's arm, and turned from him, leaving his foe to an impotent and feverish rage—the rage of a proud, self-engrossed, pampered, imperious nature against the only creature who had ever crossed its purpose or arraigned its actions.

Calmly as he had spoken to his antagonist there was no calmness on his face as he walked on alone; walked

on, away from the river, and toward Viva's home. Tempestuous pain, and anger, and many mingling unanalyzed emotions, had been awakened in him. Wrath was rare with him, and when it awoke was as the wrath of the lions; moreover, many things of bitterness, many memories long buried, stirred in him under the suddenness of this peril to the one he had chosen to defend. He had needed to ask no questions; he had told what the young man's object was, and what her danger, the first moment that his eyes had lit on them together under the trees about the water freshet. And it had filled him with an almost ungovernable passion. The insult, the jeopardy, for her, would have been from any one outrage enough to make his blood in flame; but from the son of Estmere, they took a darker color, they dealt a deeper blow.

"Must they have even *her*?" he said in his soul.

At any time it would have been painful to him to know that the risk of womanhood so nearly approached the child who to him was but such a child still; that the corruption of worldly wishes and worldly temptations had so soon found her out in her solitude to assail her; that the insidious graces of youth and of love had crept in to assault and to taint the young heart, whose transparency and whose pureness from all evil knowledge had been his delight. He had saved her from death, and sustained life in her through all the years of her sunny existence, which, through him, had never been darkened by a single cloud;—and his reward was, that the first beardless stranger who took the trouble could lead her away with a few honeyed words!

The desertion struck a heavier pang into Tricotrin's heart than he, the laughing philosopher, cared that anything should do. He would have given up much for Viva—nay, had given up much many a time to be able to send gold enough to maintain her in ease and in some sort of grace,—and she! She was willing to go away from him to the first handsome heartless youth that entreated her!

There was a tinge of jealous pain in him, which made the caprice and the ingratitude in her strike him doubly

But as he had done when in wrath with the Greek Canaris, so he did now,—he strove against and shook off the alien regret. He lifted his head and looked at the sunset which was burning, rich and red, low down in the west.

"So I and his son have crossed!" he murmured. "Ah! That is droll, Mistigri. What is not droll in this world? Tragi-comedy everywhere. How we waste our time in wrath!—and neglect all that might raise our souls. How many men will look at *that* to-night? Not one in a million; the sun sets every day,—who cares? God has cast beauty broadcast all over the earth, the gentlest teacher we can have;—and who thinks to thank God for it?"

He stood awhile looking with eagle eyes at the glorious spectacle;—the broad field of glowing light, the clouds sun-flushed to scarlet, the blue sky deepening into purple, the shafts of the dying rays slanting upward like golden spears:—stood till all the radiance sank away into the deep peace of the early night.

Then having thus exorcised his darker spirit, he moved away with his head bowed like one who turns from that which is holier and greater than himself, and from which he has sought both counsel and consolation.

CHAPTER XI.

He went back to Viva.

At the door of her home she met him, lifting her face full of eagerness.

"May I go with him? Do you like him? Did he tell you all he told me?"

Tricotrin looked a moment away from her.

"You wish so much to go with this wonderful new friend, then?"

Viva gave a longing sigh.

"Oh, yes! To see Paris illuminated!"

"Ah, capricious and true to your sex! Change—that

is all you want!" he murmured impatiently. "So! It is for the sake of Paris illuminated, is it? Would you go with him to a desert? To a dreary sun-burnt place?—to the sand-plains about Marseilles for example?"

Viva opened wide her large eyes in horror and sheer perplexity.

"Oh, mon Dieu! No!"

Tricotrin smiled; his worst dread was dissipated, he saw that love had not even left its first breath here, that what had beguiled her was the city in its festival season.

"Listen, Viva," he said gently, "you love me well enough to believe what I tell you and to be content with it without asking its reason?"

Viva looked up a little stilled and startled.

"Oh yes!"

"And to be sure that my pleasure is in your joy, and that if I deny you aught, it is because I know that thing would be hurtful?"

Viva's eyes grew graver and less luminous.

"Of course! You are so good to me!"

"Then, Viva, it will pleasure me best that you should not talk more with this friend, and that you should not see Paris till you can go with me. It would not be well, and this young man would not be a wise and fitting guide for you there. Now, if you love me as I imagine, you will be content that because *I* say so, therefore it is true and right. Can I count on your trust thus far? It is much to ask, for I am disappointing you; but it is not so much that I think you will deny it me?"

There was an infinite sweetness, and a shadow of anxiety, in his eyes; that this creature owed him all, to the very saving of her sheer existence, the man was too generous even to remember:—far too generous to base on it any claim to her gratitude or her obedience. He waited for the assurance of her faith and allegiance, as though he were her debtor, and not she his for every crust she ate, and every draught she drank.

Viva was silent a moment; the tears were in her eyes, the tears were in her voice, she could not trust herself to speak, for she was very proud, and could not bear to show -the disappointment was bitter, very bitter to

her. The great world had seemed to open its gates to her, and disclose such gorgeous and untold glories. With the words of her tempter such a pageant of splendor and wonder had spread before the vivid dreaming fancy of the child. Such lands of enchantment had risen before her, all for her sovereignty, and lit with a light that never shone upon earth! To behold these swept down suddenly, as impossible and forbidden, was a trial terrible and poignant.

Tricotrin watched her mutely.

She stood quiet, the tears she refused to let fall standing on her long drooped lashes, her face at first very flushed, and then equally colorless, all the keenness of her disappointment and something of her haughty willfulness and resistance, spoken on a face eloquent of every thought, with the eloquence of the southern nations.

She looked up at length and caught the gaze of the eyes which watched her: their look touched and won all that was generous, noble, and loving in her temper, all that was grateful and all that was unselfish; she saw that he to whom she knew that she owed life, home, protection, her very food and bed, grieved to be compelled to pain her, and asked her allegiance, not as his right, but as her free and gracious gift.

Then all that was best in her awoke. She threw her arms about him with grateful caressing affection, in a passionate repentance for that moment's disloyalty and hesitance.

"What could you ask that I would deny! I would give you my life, and you would have a right to it, since you saved it! I do not care for the diamonds, or the roses, or Paris, or the Fêtes, if you think I am better without them. It is enough that you wish me, your wish is my law!"

Tricotrin stroked her hair tenderly, where her head leant against his heart; he was silent for the instant, and his face lighted with the frank warm joy which had come there once before at the expression of her affection;—he was as rejoiced at her faith in him as though he had never done anything to merit, or give him title to demand, it!

"I thank you, Viva mine!" he said, with a force which gave almost a tremor to his voice. "That is generously

and bravely said. You have given me the best gift there is in this world—Trust. In after-years I will tell you why I seek it now."

Viva leaned against him, speechless; she had given her allegiance loyally, and with love, but she was a child, and her disappointment was great; the tears were still in her voice, and her eyes, and she could not bear to betray them, lest he should be pained to see that the trust which he asked was fraught with sorrow to herself.

"And now—another point," pursued Tricotrin. "This stranger friend of yours gave you costly golden presents?"

"Yes!—beautiful ornaments!"

Her voice was very tremulous, and her eyes looked up with pitiful beseeching appeal; her lovely jeweled toys, with which in a thousand day-dreams she had fancied herself a Marquise, an Empress, Marie Antoinette in the brilliant days at Versailles, Louise d'Orléans in the gorgeous gatherings of the Palais Royal, anything, everything!—she should not surely have to part with them!

Tricotrin read the look; and smiled.

"Nay, child; for anything I take from you, you shall have as good. You are feminine, and I would not break your heart by robbing you of your first jewels! You are a child of the Fairies, but they forgot to dower you with Philosophy—*tant pis!* But the jewels your friend gave you must go back to him, though you shall be no loser."

Viva's eyes glowed and dropped with shame.

"Was it so wicked to take them? I did not know—he said it would be cruel and discourteous to refuse? I had no one to tell me, and—they were so pretty!"

"Wicked? No!" said Tricotrin, promptly: his chief desire in all he said was to conceal from her any hint or glimpse of what had been her tempter's motive and end, and to dissipate in no iota the innocence of her own danger which she enjoyed. "It is nothing to cause you shame, Viva; it was most natural that the pretty toys beguiled your sight; are you to be wiser than all your generation, or stronger than all your sex? But now that *I* know, they must be returned to your friend; because I accept obligations from no man, and neither must you. We spoke of pride when we were together last; there is a pride that

you may cherish in your heart's heart, Viva; the pride which will never be laid beneath a debt. There was no one to tell you, and you were a child, pleased with beautiful bagatelles, and there is nothing to grieve or to flush for, at all, in the fact that you were won into taking these adornments. But remember in the future that the woman who is proud, and honors herself, must take the gold and the gifts of no man. You would give your cheek to the caress of no stranger; never take from him that for which he might, were it only in mirth, ask you for a caress as his payment."

Viva listened, the flush deep upon her forehead, her eyes drooped in humiliation, all the haughty pride of her temper was roused by and followed his words, and the bitterness of the golden ornaments was far exceeding now the sweetness they had given.

"Send them back to him! Send them back! I hate them now!" she said, passionately, while the hot color burned painfully in her face, and her lips quivered. "He wanted to kiss me once, and I told him I was no peasant girl; but it showed how low I had fallen in his sight, how I had given him the right to despise me by taking his presents!"

Her voice broke down, she flung herself upon the grass, and sobbed aloud half in grief, half in rage; her heart was not even touched by the loss of her tempter, but her pride was wounded to the quick. In the stead of the diamonds and the deathless roses, and all the wondrous, glorious, unknown world, this Waif and Stray of the Loire, who had the hauteur of a child-queen, had only the ruin of her shattered castles, and the misery, a thousandfold greater, of having lost her own dignity, and stooped to abasement and dishonor!

And Tricotrin, who would have gone half across the world, and given a kingdom if he had had one, to avoid the sight of anything feminine in sorrow, found himself, all philosopher that he was, compelled to look on what he hated, and keep by him, for a minute or two at least, a cucumber that was very acid.

For he loved the girl with all the warmth of his generous and ardent nature; and he was obliged to deal her

something of this sense of pain and of humiliation, lest a worse thing should come unto her, and the wood-dove fall a prey to some other tercel's beak

"Oh, Mistigri, Mistigri!" murmured he to that inseparable confidante, with pathetic regret. "How impossible it is for a philosopher to remain perfectly philosophical when he has once given way to such a miserable weakness as to take an interest in anything that is feminine!"

Viva lay on the grass in an abandonment of shame and sorrow, not for the golden toys, still less for their donor, but for those glorious castles in the air, that were all hurled down and had vanished like a dream of the night, and far more for the terrible sense that filled her of guiltiness and shame.

The forbidden Fruit that had looked so fair had changed to the darkest and bitterest of ashes in the lips of this proud young daughter of Eve.

Tricotrin let the emotion have its way; and his own thoughts wandered, in a fiery wrath, from the child to her tempter, and from him to many things and many memories that were dark and heavy, and rarely allowed to cloud a mind which best loved the light of the sun, and the noonday of clear philosophies, and the rich colors of wine-cups, and the aerial hues of a poet's fancies.

Then—when it had nearly spent itself—he stooped and laid his hand on her bowed head.

"Viva mine, keep thy tears back: life may want them, thou art a woman! Do not weep till thou hast erred, and that most surely thou hast not done now. Let none shame thee, save thyself; and let that never be. Thou art a child, and hast a child's love of pretty toys; that is all; no harm is done. And remember—if thou grievest I am grieved. It is I who have disappointed thee; and each sigh thou shalt give for thy lost bagatelles and thy banished castles, will be a reproach to me."

He had judged rightly the chord to touch. Viva could be led thus, though driven never.

She lifted her head, and smiled at him through her sorrows, a smile very loving, very wistful, and very proud.

"Then—I will not give them one regret!"

And he knew that the word she gave she would keep.

CHAPTER XII.

"MISTIGRI! Can a man be ever certain of his philosophy? Brutus had served her faithfully all his life, and broke down in his very last hour!" said Tricotrin, plaintively, as he stood smoking under the starlight in the porch, when Viva had sobbed herself to sleep under the eaves, with the tears still glistening on her closed lashes. "You and I were wretched sentimentalists in saving the Waif, and I suppose we shall be so to the end, having once concerned ourselves with anything so irrational as the upsetting of her most far-sighted and excellently judicious mother's plans. I have been shockingly weak and unphilosophic to-day;—contemptible! Sentiment the second; and quite as bad as the first. I have interfered between her and the most lucrative trade of all for women who cannot be duchesses. My young lord's introduction would have been an admirable one, and he was right that diamonds would have fallen in her lap by thousands;—she would have ruined her hundreds and tens of hundreds before two years, I dare say. The world would have raved of her, and she would have had a woman's most delicious empire,—the Power of Destruction. That young man was wise and practical, and I—I was unworldly, unphilosophic, everything that is contemptible, Mistigri! What business had I to put my oar in the boat, instead of letting her drift down the stream to the wine-washed roses and Messieurs les Grands Seigneurs? Ah, grand'-mère, hark a moment!"

The little old brown woman, looking like a figure out of one of Ostade's pictures, as she moved across the broad swathes of moonlight that checkered her kitchen, came toward him, trembling somewhat, for she had a horrible doubt that something had gone wrong about the Prince Fainéant, and that she had acted with an infamous want of discretion and judgment.

"Grand'mère, why did you let that young wolf in lamb's clothing get the ear of the Waif?"

Grand'mère began to tremble more and more, and broke into a stream of self-excuses and of protestation. Tricotrin cut them short.

"I know, friend Virelois, I know. You are a woman, and he was comely to look at, and you fancied you heard the chimes of bridal bells, and you thought he was a noble prince in disguise!"

"Oh, mon Dieu, Tricotrin! How do you know all you do?"

"Little birds tell me," responded Tricotrin promptly. "Silly woman! What do you suppose the swallows fly in and out of the ivy all the day long for, if it be not on messages?"

Grand'mère paid no attention; her eyes were sad and anxious.

"Is there anything wrong with the young man?" she asked. "I had my fears; I did what I could. But you see——"

"It was the old story. Love laughing at locksmiths; and the locksmiths do not exist who can shut in such a thing as the Waif. Well, the young man will not come here any more; and if you chance to hear he bears a high name, keep the knowledge to yourself, that is all. There are no disguised princes in the world; and as for bridal bells, no man loves them very much, and rich men not at all."

Grand'mère shuddered, lifting her hands.

"Ah—h—h! The nobles are so wicked!"

"Not in the least," Tricotrin contradicted. "They are no more wicked than other men—not so much so indeed, because they are educated. Vice is as ripe in villages as in cities, and to one peasant that 'falls' for a gentleman's wooing there are tenscore that do so at the asking of Pierre, the postillion, or Jacquot, the cowherd. Well, grand'mère, you loved honor and honesty all the days of your life—what have your deities done for you?"

"Kept my pot empty many a time, but my conscience clean, thank God."

Tricotrin looked at her with the smile that was epigram, fire, sunlight, and sadness all in one.

"Grand'mère! You, the disciple of virtue, are the strongest irony upon her that a satirist could paint! Your pot empty?—ah! And if you had been a philosophically wicked woman it would have overflowed with fat fowls and good rice? This Prince Fainéant was the wise man, and I the fool. Jeanne, the honest woman, clicks about in wooden shoes, sleeps on a flock bed, lives on black crusts and onion soups, gets withered and crippled and weather-stained before she is at middle age, toils in the snow and the sun to keep body and soul together, and dies in the workhouse to be buried as a pauper. Euphrasie, the bad woman, has pretty, warm, broidered slippers, sleeps between cambric sheets, lies in cachemires as her carriage rolls along, eats and drinks the best of all lands, laughs through life to a gay opera air, has a happy paganism that makes her quite untroubled with her future, and when she retires on her pirated gains, can buy absolution from any church extant, die in the odor of sanctity, and have her noble qualities blazoned on a marble tomb. That is what virtue and vice are, grand'mère, and how they pay their servitors."

Grand'mère stood in the strip of moonlight, her head pensively on one side, her little brown face sad and bewildered. Then suddenly the old woman raised herself erect, and her still bright eyes took a resolute light.

"That is true, Tricotrin—that is terribly true. There is not a word of it but is fearfully, horribly, shamefully true. But see here, Tricotrin, though I am old and poor, and but for you most like should be now dead of want, there is something I would not part with for all that gilded shame; it is this—just this: to know, all my life through, that no man ever had the right to scorn me; to know, all my life through, that they were bound to say, 'that woman is miserably poor, but she cannot be bought.' There is something sweet in that—a sweetness that does not perish. Yet I had my tempters too. I was fair to look on when I was young. And I had wealth offered to me if I would have taken shame. But it was just this which saved me, Tricotrin—not religion, perhaps, and not pride of a surety, but just this: that no man should ever feel the sex of his mother was outraged in me, that

no man should ever say, 'I can despise you, for have I not bought you?'"

Tricotrin's eyes grew very soft as he heard her. When her words were ended he bent low with a tender reverence to the little, old, wrinkled, white-haired peasant.

"Grand'mère, you are a good woman! If that temper were more taught to girlhood there would be little vice for which to rail against men"

"And that is true, too!" sighed grand'mère as she went back to the fire to boil a pot of chocolate for him.

Tricotrin stood long in the moonlit doorway alone, while Mistigri swung herself in the ivy after the moths, and the quiet night lay soft and dark upon the country, while now and then the lowing of cattle, the bark of a dog, the chimes of a belfry, broke faintly on the stillness.

CHAPTER XIII.

When Viva awoke in the morning with the birds, it was, for the first time in her life, with a certain dull pain at her heart, with a certain dreamy sense of some loss and some sorrow. She sat up in her little bed, and looked at her gold toys where they stood, placed close to rejoice her waking vision, on an oak chest under her casement; and as she looked the tears swam in her eyes, her pretty white chest heaved with a quick sob. It was not altogether alone for the things; she had dreamed such dreams through her Prince Fainéant, and those dreams were all dead forever!

Moreover, her first disenchantment, her first sense of shame, were bitter to bear, and though she had cared nothing at all for her handsome young wooer, she had cared very much for all that he had offered her: so much so that she might have taken that desire for change to have been love for him, as many girls do, had not her own true and strong affection for Tricotrin preserved her from the error. The homage, the flattery, the sense of

her power, the belief in his submission to it, had been so delightful to her ; all the native coquetry in her had so exulted in its first exercise, all the imperious vanity in her had found such charm in its victory, that Viva mourned the loss of her Faust with a poignant regret, which though only egotism made her almost think it was tenderness. It was not: any other would have done equally well in his place, and with her fancies equally flattered, Viva would have been equally happy. But as it was, there was no one to substitute for him, and therefore she gave him a generous regret that would have looked very much like love to him had he seen her half risen on the little white couch, with her hair falling over her bare shoulders, with her great eyes swimming, and her lovely mouth swollen with tears.

But Viva was brave and was true to her word. She had many faults and more foibles; but she had the one supreme excellence of unerring courage. She had said she would give all her bagatelles up; and she did not once waver. When she had flung the cold bright water over her face and form, and dressed, and knelt awhile under the wooden cross which grand'mère had placed in her chamber, Viva was nerved to sacrifice ; and in one sense she hated the things,—they had wounded her pride,—she had no wish to keep them.

Yet her tears fell on them one by one as she looked at each for the last time of all, and put them by, one by one, in a basket. Though she did not know it, she had cause to weep,—it was her first faith broken, her first illusion faded, her first trust betrayed. Youth is wise in its prescience when it recoils from betrayal as the deadliest thing that awaits it in life.

When they were all placed in their basket, Viva looked at her face in her own tiny mirror: "I promised him I would not have one regret," she thought; and she knew her face looked very tell-tale of regret indeed.

The child was frank and honest as the day; she had not learned yet even to dream of concealing what she felt. But she was courageous and she was proud; above all she was resolute not to give pain to Tricotrin. And she dashed her tears away, and leant out into the fresh morn-

ing air, and tried to sing one of her river-songs with her old gayety; then ran swiftly down the stairs, and placed the jewels in his hands where he stood smoking, and rushed away without a word into the sunlight. Those pretty bijoux!—and it was not those alone for which she sorrowed—it was for all the dreams that were gone with them!

Tricotrin did not seek to follow her; he comprehended her wish for solitude; he stood looking at the toys with a curious conflict of emotions on his face. If he had obeyed his impulse, he could have crushed them all into atoms beneath his heel.

"Pretty things with which to chaffer and barter away a life!" he said in his teeth, as he folded them aside in a packet and addressed it to the young man's name. Then with it thrust into his pocket he went across the fields toward Villiers.

As he went he softly took from the breast of his blouse, and touched with loving fingers, the Attavante's Dante.

"I did not think to part ever with you," he said gently to the book as though it were a loving thing. "But faith must be kept with the Waif; she must have her toys back; and there is no other way. Since you must go you shall go to him."

He looked long and wistfully at the book's familiar face; then put it into his breast more tenderly than he would have done had it been a roll of banker's notes for thousands. He loved the thing; it had been his from his childhood, and had accompanied him through so many changeful years; the only relic he had kept of a long-perished life forever lost.

But he had promised Viva the equals of her golden toys: wealth he had none: the book must go. He would have worked willingly for the jewels' worth; but that must have been slow purchase of them, and he would not have the child mourn her playthings for an hour more than was inevitable. The leagues brought him to Villiers; the same route which he had traversed the day after he had first found her among the clematis. He paused at the little picturesque building that stood in English fashion e the huge entrance gates. A comely brown-eyed,

laughing woman, with children clinging to her skirt, greeted him with delighted welcome as he appeared; it was Ninette, who had long been Valentin's wife, and who was happy in the tender, sunny, graceful fashion with which the French peasant will so often attain happiness even in the midst of poverty: a dragon, however, that never visited the home of the little quondam fruit-seller.

"Is the young lord at the château, Ninette?" he asked, after submitting to all the greetings of the little brunette, who loved him well as the founder of all her wedded peace by his timely counsel to the over-humble Valentin. Ninette shook her head: the young lord had left Villiers last evening.

Tricotrin put the packet into her hands.

"Give that to his servant, Ninette; and say nothing of who brought it."

Ninette's eyes grew grave and anxious a moment.

"Surely I will; and be silent as the dead. But—is it true, Tricotrin?—I heard the other day that Milord was seen very often with the little angel at grand'mère's?"

"It is true," said Tricotrin, curtly. "But he will be seen no more, I promise you."

"That is well, I am glad you are come," murmured Madame Valentin. "I got a little anxious; I remembered what you told me once about those people's love. And the little one is so young, and so proud!"

Tricotrin nodded; he did not care to pursue the subject; and after a few kindly questions concerning her family and their welfare, he passed onward into the park up the wooded terraces. Ninette knew him too well of old to ask him whither he went.

But as she turned into her cottage her face was grave, and she stood pensively before her old mother, who was sitting by the sunshiny casement, shelling peas and washing cabbages.

"Mother! I hope the pretty child will never bring woe to Tricotrin?"

The old woman cracked a pea-pod sharply.

"Viva?" she murmured. "She owes him everything. I dare say she will break his heart some day. That is the way of them *all*."

Such was the experience of her own life of eighty and two years!

Meanwhile Tricotrin went up toward the castle. There was a graver and more careworn thought upon him than was usual there. There was something of impatience and of pain. He had resolved to keep faith with the young man, as the young man had chosen exile in lieu of exposure; and the former served Viva by far the best, insomuch as it kept the offense against her untold; and a girl's name is like a peach:—the down once brushed off the fruit bears the trace of the rough handling forever. Still, though he did not go to expose Estmere's son, it was Estmere whom he sought. He had heard yester-eve, as he had come through the country, that the noble had returned for a brief time to his pleasure-home.

He soon found himself in the gardens; the same gardens where he had spoken to Valentin among the azaleas. Years made no difference here; the turf only grew smoother, the flowers only more abundant, under the culture that wealth commanded. All the old beauty that the place had known in the days of the Regency bloomed afresh over it as though it had never been destroyed under the neglect of long years and an impoverished race: it had looked to Viva like some marvelous chateau of the Rénaissance times, fit for the splendid prison of the Sleeping Beauty, and for once her extravagant fancy had not led her astray.

Tricotrin knew that the English earl rose early; and that most early mornings brought him out on the terraces of Villiers before the more indolent throng of his guests had awakened. Though the name of the foreign race never by choice passed his lips, there was little concerning their life with which he was not acquainted, down even to the trifling details of their daily habits; and here his knowledge proved aright. While still far off himself among the labyrinths of roses he saw Estmere; walking slowly before the chateau with one companion only, and followed step for step, by a great Russian boarhound.

The sun shone full upon the terrace, and on the tall form of the English nobleman; it looked taller still beside the diminutive person of the foreign statesman with

him, and his face had the same beauty, scarcely aged since Tricotrin had looked in on him in his banqueting-room: the fair, delicate, grave beauty of one in whom pride was stronger than passion, and the intellect dominated the senses. The face was calm, cold, full of thought; the lines of the mouth were musing and somewhat disdainful, the eyes were blue, luminous, penetrating, revealing nothing, save when, in very rare moments of pleasure, a smile would gleam in them that women valued as they did not value the less hardly-won smiles of men more easily amused and more rapidly interested.

There was no smile in them now, but a displeased surprise as they glanced over the gardens and saw an intruder there.

"A man in a blouse!—a man with a monkey! Come to beg, I presume," murmured the earl. "What can the gardeners and the park-rangers be about?"

His companion looked where he looked; but with a different expression.

"Why! That is Tricotrin!"

"And who is Tricotrin?"

"A folio could not tell!"

"I imagine one word could!"

"And what word would that be?"

"A scamp," said Estmere, with his eyes still on the man with a monkey.

"Oh, no!" cried the foreigner, eagerly. "You mistake; indeed you mistake. Tricotrin has the most marvelous talents, the most marvelous influence over the populace; he might be anything if he chose, and there is nothing he does not manage to know. He is a character;—quite a character!"

"I do not like characters," said Estmere, chillily. "A man has lost the fact before he acquires the title. 'A great character,' says the world when it means 'a great rogue!'"

"Tricotrin is no rogue——"

"No? Then if he be your visitor, allow me to leave you to him."

"He is not my visitor," muttered the French states-

man hurriedly, embarrassed between his desire to speak to the new-comer and his fear of his host's courtly contempt. "I am not aware how he comes in your gardens, but indeed—Tricotrin is so well with the people, it does not do to incense him. No government dare touch him, though any other man would be proscribed for one-half what he utters. He is a rank democrat; but——"

"A democrat!" echoed the cold musical tones of the owner of Villiers. "With advanced views of 'Progress' that shall turn the lowest strata topmost! With too noble a spirit to be restricted by the petty laws of Meum and Tuum! With a passion for liberty conceived in a wine-shop and nursed at the galleys! Thanks, I have no desire for his presence in my grounds. Since you know him, will you be kind enough to order him away?"

Tricotrin had drawn near enough by this time to hear the concluding phrases, but he had looked so earnestly at Estmere, and as he had looked had been so thoroughly occupied with his own thoughts, that he had not noted the first words; at the last all his archest laughter gleamed radiantly in his eyes:

"Order me away? Ah, M. Pharamonde, what do you say to that? You know I could bring all my Loirais back with me to sack this dainty place!"

"Threats?" said Estmere with cold disdain;—and he glanced at his French friend to see how the insolent challenge was received and resented.

Pharamonde, a minister of timorous policies,—who caressed the people because he feared them, as the hand of a coward caresses the head of a mastiff;—tried to laugh off the embarrassment he felt between his desire to propitiate the Bohemian, and yet hold his dignity with the Noble. But the jest he essayed fell dead: Tricotrin stood unmoved, in merciless amusement at his difficulty; Estmere turned away in a scorn he scarcely endeavored to conceal.

"I will leave you, Pharamonde, to converse with—your friend!"

The minister winced and reddened; Tricotrin laughed outright.

"Nay, I claim no friendship with M. Pharamonde; and my business lies with you, my Lord Earl."

Estmere surveyed him with the amazement of a great man whom no familiarities ever approach.

"I never have business with strangers; and—by what right do you intrude in my gardens?"

"Bah! The right that I found a door ready open: do you statesmen want any other excuse for intruding into a neighbor's empire? Only you go farther;—you rifle his treasuries—I do not touch even one of your rosebuds. A stranger, am I? Ah! Well, M. Pharamonde here will vouch for me; vouch at any rate that I did not come out of the galleys; and that I will not dance the carmagnole yet on your terraces."

Estmere's eyes rested on him as he spoke; eyes well used to read character keenly, well able to penetrate through the surface of all things. He had never seen any one like the man who thus addressed him,—a man of the people, in a blue blouse, and with a little black monkey peering over his shoulder, yet a man with the head of a sun-god and the rich ringing voice of a gentleman.

"Come, M. Pharamonde!" cried Tricotrin. "Stand my sponsor for once! Assure Lord Estmere that the impertinence in me of being original has not as yet led to the addendum of being criminal; which he appears to consider is its natural and due development!"

"Indeed, Tricotrin," murmured the minister, not knowing very well how to reply. "You mistake entirely; I was about to assure my lord how invariably for good is the singular influence you exercise over the people!"

"I doubt if 'my lord' will believe that; he has no love for democrats. Still it may suffice to make him do what I want—buy this book of me."

Estmere—who had paused in some interest, and in more distaste, at the interruption which aroused sufficient surprise in him to make him remain a listener and a spectator of the unknown intruder on his privacy—glanced at the volume and thought to himself that the eccentricity of this new-comer was little short of insanity. Yet that mere glance told him, a famed connoisseur in such mat-

ters, that the book was a most rare one: was it possible that the man had stolen it?

Tricotrin, with his swift intuition, read the doubt of him; and the humorous laughter glittered more archly and ironically in his eyes.

"Look at it, monseigneur!" he said, holding it out. "No thief's hands have soiled it. Will you put it among your treasures at Beaumanoir?"

"Beaumanoir!"

Lord Estmere echoed in some involuntary surprise the name of his old native home: what could a French wanderer, he wondered, know of it and his world-famous library? But he took the volume and turned its leaves over in all a connoisseur's interest.

"A genuine Attavante!" he murmured, "and in perfect condition."

The minister beside him glanced over his arm at it:

"The Attavante's Dante!" he cried. "Why, Tricotrin, that is the very book for which you refused untold gold from the Cardinal last year at Nice!"

Tricotrin shrugged his shoulders.

"I did not want the money then: I do now. Besides, I have no affection for Monsignori. I have brought Earl Eustace the book because he has a love of such things, a love more genuine than the mere collector's pride of accumulation and possession."

Estmere's eyes were lifted to look at him for one moment as the words "Earl Eustace" were spoken:—to be called by his baptismal name! No such familiarity had ever been taken in his life with him. He said nothing, however; but continued his examination of the literary treasure.

"You need the money?" he asked at length.

Tricotrin gave a gesture of half haughty impatience.

"My lord, all the questions *you* need concern yourself with are,—what is it worth, and whether you wish for it. There are hundreds in Europe who will buy it if you do not"

Estmere was silent: he felt himself to be justly rebuked, and proud as he was, he liked the rebuke. and liked the speaker better for it.

"It is a perfect copy," he said, turning to the French minister. "What did the Cardinal you allude to offer for it?"

His friend named the price.

"Too much by one-half," struck in Tricotrin. "I have no patience for those fools' prices;—after all, what is an 'antique?' Only something grown mouldy by age and disuse! And with a book, like a man, the lack of pedigree matters nothing, if the pages within be writ fair."

The sentiment was too democratic for the person it was addressed to, and he made no reply: but with another look at the miniatures of the Dante he determined to give it a home in his library.

"If you will accept the Cardinal's very fair price, the book is mine," he said. "It is fully worth it as bibliopoles' treasures go."

Tricotrin bowed his head: and Estmere thought as he saw the gesture, "that man bows like my equal;—and with infinite grace. What can he possibly be? Surely no common vagrant."

He paused a moment, strongly inclined to enter into more converse with this stranger, whose frankness, and whose singularity attracted him: but old habit, natural reserve, and an aristocrat's detestation of democracy and its professors made him resist the impulse: he gave the Attavante back to Tricotrin.

"I will send you the gold, and be good enough to return the book to the bearer. If you will go within, my people will give you some breakfast."

Tricotrin's forehead flushed red.

"I remain here," he said, curtly. And I do not require your hospitality."

"Ah, Estmere! that man is so proud," whispered Pharamonde. Estmere took no notice, but passed into the house, through an open window; he half repented that he had bought the Attavante; still,—the man must have wanted the money, or he would not have offered it for sale; and it was of genuine worth and authenticity.

Tricotrin paced up and down the terrace with restless uneven steps; the French statesman approached him.

"Tricotrin! if you needed gold why not have asked me?"

Tricotrin's eagle glance flashed on him.

"Gifts to men of my station are bribes: and, if they are not that, they are alms. I take neither!"

"But a wage for a fair service? Look you, what service you might render the government——"

"By making the flocks submit still more passively to be shorn, and the droves to be driven out still more docilely to perish in the war-tracks? It is not my work."

"Nay, nay!" murmured the facile and courteous statesman. "Not that. But by the use of your influence over the people at the elections——"

"I never interfere in such matters."

"Why so?"

"Why? Because if I did I must show them the naked truth as I see it, and if the nations once saw that of those whom they call rulers, the world would be red with a sea of blood. For the people are long submissive as the camel; but when once they rise they are tigers. We, who know that, tremble to bid them to throw off their overladen burdens, lest the patient beast that has knelt in pain for so long should rise, transformed, with talon and fang, to destroy both his kind and his drivers."

He spoke with passion, with more bitterness too than was common with him: Pharamonde looked at him almost with fear, and was silent:

"That is not the usual hesitation of the demagogue," he thought.

"I am no demagogue," said Tricotrin, with rapid divination of his musing. "Do you know what the demagogue is? The man who rouses the camels into impatience of their burdens, that he may rifle the baggage as it falls to the ground in the strife."

"Milord sends you this," interrupted a servant, approaching him with the gold for the Dante.

Tricotrin took it, and gave the book in its stead, without a word: Pharamonde eyed him curiously, as though he were some natural phenomenon.

"You are a strange man! When you might pick up wealth by the handsful!"

"I do not care to soil my fingers," he answered, curtly, as he made a gesture of adieu to the statesman, and went down the steps of the terrace. He had not been wholly at ease in the interview: it had galled him, and caused him a certain pain. The Waif's pretty toys were purchased, like many another luxury, at the price of a pang to a human heart. He loved the book well: also in one sense he loved the man to whom he had bartered it.

Pharamonde went within and joined his host, who was standing in the library of the château, turning over the leaves of his purchase.

"You do not understand Tricotrin," said the French minister. "He is as proud, in his own fashion, as you can be in yours. Charity, patronage, hospitality even, if it be such as he cannot return,—pshaw! Tricotrin will suffer them no more than he would suffer the lash."

"Well—a good spirit that. But who is he?"

"Tricotrin!"

"That is not a name?"

"It is his name; and no name since Mirabeau's has had more charm for the people. He could have been a second Mirabeau had he cared to be so."

"And why did he not care?"

Pharamonde shrugged his shoulders.

"He loves his liberty; and he has no ambition. I have seen much of him at divers times; he has no love for me, but he is a curious study. He is a ripe scholar; he has marvelous eloquence when he will; he has the genius of command in him if ever he choose to exert it; and—he never troubles himself to do anything except to play at a peasant's bridal feast, or a village wine-shop's carousal, with the talent of Paganini and Bamboche!"

"A bohemian!" said Estmere, with a slight gesture of comprehension and disgust. "He is not the first by many who has wasted a genius that might have ruled an empire, in reigning over a pot-house revelry!"

The conclusion was unjust, but it pleased Pharamonde: it was a little revenge for the rebuff that the bohemian had given him.

"A scholar, you say?" continued Estmere, still looking over the Dante. "Pray what were his antecedents

then: he must have had other domiciles than wine-shops?"

"Ah, that I cannot tell you," said the statesman very truthfully. "I do not think there is a living soul that knows where he came from. Antecedents! he would not acknowledge anything so aristocratic. On my honor I think he sprang out of the earth!"

"Full-armed, I suppose!" said Estmere, with a satirical inflection in his voice that his guest did not relish. Pharamonde felt that his English friend had a polite contempt for both him and his bohemian.

He changed the subject, and Estmere put the book aside in a cabinet.

It was late in the evening when Tricotrin returned to his Waif; he had been to Blois, which was many miles distant, and a full day's journey from the little lonely vineyard-shrouded village which lay hidden under greenery by the waterside, like a lark's nest among the grasses.

Viva was sitting on the stone stile of the doorway, with the white cat Bébé in her lap: the sun had gone down, but there was just ruddy glow enough left to warm to rich hues her pretty drooped head, and the soft grace of her shoulders and bosom, as she sat with her arms crossed, inclosing Bébé in their clasp, while the quick heave of her chest was shown by the open square-cut bodice she wore:—a dress half like a peasant's, half like an old picture, in which the provincialism of grand'mère and the fantastic fancy of the child had been blended.

Something in the shadows, or something in the attitude, made her look less childlike and more womanlike to Tricotrin than she had ever done. Perhaps it might be because one man had sought her as woman, not child, that the fact of her childhood having well-nigh passed away struck on him for the first time.

He paused a moment unseen, looking at her; and for the first time also a dreaming conjecture came over him: he thrust it away with half a smile, half a sigh:

"Pshaw!" he thought to himself. "She is a child to me, though not to that youth. What should I get but the fate of Bruno?"

He looked no longer, but softly approached her and

dropped the packet he bore into her lap: she started to her feet, upsetting the luckless Bébé, and gave a cry of delight. As the string of the packet had broken, into her hands had fallen the fac-similes of her lost bijoux, with something still costlier and prettier added; golden toys, that glittered with rainbow hues in their gems, under the flamelike reflections that still came from the west.

She threw her arms about him and thanked him with all the vivacity and the frank abandonment of her nature: —and he was repaid for the sale of the Attavante.

"Will they do as well, little one?" he asked her.

"As well! A thousand times better! For you know how dearly I love *you*, and—" she hesitated a moment, then leaned a little nearer to him, with the most charming confidential and penitent grace in the world, "it was very wrong, perhaps, for he meant to be kind, and he begged me so often to love him,—but I never could care for him as much as I wished to do. He was only a Prince Fainéant after all!"

Tricotrin's face lightened with a brighter gleam than it had worn all the day through.

"A Prince Fainéant,—true! And his offered crowns would have been only of brass, and very heavy on your brows, if you had worn them."

"Ah?" Viva looked up into his face with a touch of awe on her; she had some vague impression that some evil of unknown magnitude would have befallen her if she had been enticed into following her fairy prince. "But—Paris would have been real, would it not? I do so want to see Paris!"

"The heaven and the hell of women? Oh, child, you are better here."

"But just to see it?" pleaded Viva. "Just to see those wonderful summer nights he told me of, with the streets like streams of living fire, and the avenues all glittering with lights like a million of stars among a million leaves! As I grow older, you will take me with you, will you not?—take me with you everywhere?"

A radiance shown in his eyes as he looked down on her and laughed.

"We will see;—when you are older!"

The evening seemed very fair to him, as he played her favorite airs of Lulli and of Grétry in the moonlit porch, and the girl listened in thoughtful pleasure, thrown down in her young careless grace at his feet.

The Prince Fainéant was well-nigh forgotten; and Tricotrin was repaid for the loss of his long-treasured Dante.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next day the vintage began.

All through the grape country there were mirth and work, and rejoicing and abundance. Grapes on the laden trailing bough; grapes on the heavy oxen wagons; grapes piled high in the winepresses under the shade; grapes on the braided hair of girls where they laughed in the sun; grapes in the rosy hands of children where they lay asleep, flushed with their feasting; grapes everywhere in lavish plenty, for the summer had been splendid, and the harvest was fine in due sequence.

Tricotrin loved the vintage month.

It had been vintage time when he had first come among his Loirois, and laughed and danced, and been crowned like a young Bacchus in the years of his boyhood. It was rarely that he was away from central France in the wine season; and the good people averred that in his presence the harvest was always more profuse than it was in the autumns he was absent. It was without doubt more gay; for they never worked so joyously, they never danced so heedlessly, as when he was among them. He would work himself, giving the wage that he gained to the oldest woman in the district, or to some fatherless child. He would make the young girls laugh from sunrise to sunset; he would lighten the oxen's toil by bringing them ol juicy leaves and grasses where they stood in noonday. He would play to the young of the

villages half through the sultry starry nights, while their feet flew to the most intoxicating dance melodies that ever were heard even under the skies of France. And of all those whose labor he thus lightened with jest and with raillery, and with a sunny mellow laughter, fit for the lips of a Dionysus, there was not one who was happier than he.

From the first years of her remembrance his Waif had learned to look for him at the vine-gatherings. Wherever he might wander during the three other seasons—and he wandered very far and wide with ceaseless, restless pleasure in the mere sense of motion—he was almost certain to enter France at the late summer-time, to be among the pleasant voices and the brown, bright eyes of the people he loved best.

The vintage had long been the child's festal month, for there were none for leagues around her but welcomed the stray thing whose history they all knew, and who was hallowed and endeared to them by the fact that he had taken pity on her destitution and abandonment. Among the peasantry the singularity and mystery of the child's appearance in their presence had something of the same enchantment that it possessed for herself. Nothing was too wonderful for them to believe of any creature whom Tricotrin protected; and Viva's own views as to her elfin origin were not so wholly unshared by the country people as might be imagined by those who are ignorant of how deeply struck are the roots of superstition in the primitive places of all countries.

She unconsciously had fostered the impression by her dainty tastes, her proud ways, her haughty young waywardness, to which they cheerfully submitted because she belonged to Tricotrin; and Viva held an undisputed sovereignty over the whole riverside, in which her fair face was ever seen. And now, in the gladness and the gayety of the vintage, she swiftly forgot the love passages of her fairy prince. Her heart had not been touched, and her admiration had not been excited. She now possessed as pretty things as those he had given her, and she enjoyed them more because she enjoyed them openly, without the latent fear that she was doing wrong, which had

poisoned her pleasure in the young lord's gifts. Beyond a certain gratification, unconscious, but born of the innate coquetry in her, that she had been the object of such an episode, little remained with her of the poison he had sown—nothing sufficient to spoil her enjoyment of the harvest-time, save that she would now and then think that to ride on a bullock-drawn wagon, or to dance on the top of a winepress, was hardly amusement regal enough for such a princess as he had told her that she was. But the amusement was too attractive to be relinquished for that consideration, and she consoled herself by thinking that, at any rate, he was not there to see.

Tricotrin, moreover, was with her, and Viva, in his presence, was always her brightest, her gentlest, her best; she felt "good" with him, as she never did with any other. He knew the way to the hidden gold in this capricious and thoughtless nature—a way which others continually missed.

Vineyards lay all about the old place where she dwelt, on either side of the flashing river, and stretching far away into the interior, broken here and there by path or road, by wood or hamlet, but extending widely round on every side, and rich, at this period of the vine's life, with the fruit all ripened and glowing to purple or to gold. Viva wandered in them in joyful idleness all the livelong day; and he himself asked no better life than this out-of-door life, stripping the laden branches, laughing with the handsome brown women, aiding the aged who could not work for themselves, and taking the oxen homeward through the cool shaded bridle-lanes.

"The possessor of an Attavante's Dante should not be a laborer in a vineyard," said a slow, melodious voice behind him one morning as he worked—worked in earnest, for he wanted a day's wage to make up the loss of a poor old woman whose hen-house had been pillaged of all its fowls in the night.

Tricotrin looked up and saw the purchaser of the Dante, who, riding by a narrow pathway through the vines, had checked his horse for an instant.

"Good day, Lord Estmere. Why not?" he returned. "Another poet, Virgil, loved the fields right well. Be-

sides, 'to be a husbandman is but to retreat from the city—from the world as it is man's, to the world as it is God's.'"

Estmere regarded him earnestly. Here was a French bohemian quoting Cowley in the purest English.

"You are a scholar and a poet yourself?" he asked.

Tricotrin laughed:

> "'Niemand will ein Schuster seyn
> Jedermann ein Dichter.'

"Though it may well be doubted if he who mends other people's shoes is not of more use than he who only tinkers his own sonnets."

Estmere's meditative eyes dwelt on those that the rich Aristophanic humors, the brilliant Swift-like irony, the Burgundian Piron-wit of many nationalities, seemed to lighten to their Hudibrastic laughter.

"You speak three languages with equal purity of accent. Of what country are you, may I ask?" he said, at length.

"I will speak twenty if you like; and I am a Cosmopolitan."

"A 'citizen of the world' then. You have traveled greatly?"

"I have lived all over the world," said Tricotrin, with a shrug of his shoulders; "it is not big enough to make that much of a boast."

"And the result of all these experiences is to bring you back to a vine-field?"

"Well,—Diocletian went back to a cabbage garden. A vine-field is more poetic."

"But Diocletian had been sated with empire?"

"Well; and if the result of empire and satiety be to conclude that there is nothing equal to cabbages for comfort, is it not better to take the vegetables at first and eschew the travail altogether?"

Estmere smiled: despite his prejudices against the class of men to which he believed Tricotrin to belong, and his dislike to anything that approached to lawlessness or democratic sentiment, he could not help feeling a

certain attraction toward the speaker. His intuition told him that he addressed no common man, though he spoke with one working like a day laborer among the vines.

"I imagine," he answered, "that Diocletian's was an affectation of philosophy and renunciation rather than a genuine tribute to the charms of cabbages. Moreover talent is rare; it is always a pity that it should be wasted while its possessor does hand-work that any boor could equally well execute."

"Pardie! May not talent be equally wasted in organizing wholesale murders by shot or steel, or wholesale political chicaneries of the people? yet those are what you statesmen call 'glory' and 'state craft.' Zoroaster says that he who sows the ground with diligence acquires more religious merit than he who repeats ten thousand prayers: and I believe he is right."

"That may be; yet the sowing is only for the body, the meditations may well enrich the mind, or as men call it, the soul."

"That is true. And a great thought makes the world richer than ten shipments of gold. But, believe me, Earl Eustace, because the hands labor, it does not follow that the soul lies barren of tillage. Goethe knew what beautiful things the vines can utter; he need not have heard those less in working, than in strolling, among them."

Estmere looked at him curiously, and his voice had a certain haughty cadence in it that it had lost in exchanging these phrases.

"Why do you change my title thus?" he asked. "It is a singular mode of address."

Tricotrin's eyes laughed with the same ironic mirth that had been in them before, when he had heard himself arraigned for entering the rose gardens.

"Why so? You are Earl Eustace, are you not? There have been Earl John, and Earl Philip, and Earl Louis, and many more—the Blind Earl, and the Mad Earl, and the Child Earl, and some others, in the chronicles of your race. Why should not you be distinctive, too, by your name?"

"You know much of my family?" asked Estmere, in more surprise than he chose to display.

"Oh-hè!" said Tricotrin, carelessly. "I know most things; and the Estmeres are not lights hidden under a bushel. Your people have never loved obscurity, beau Sire."

"We have done our best not to deserve it," said Estmere, coldly. "Good day to you."

He rode onward through the vine-fields, astonished, perplexed, a little annoyed; he did not feel pleasured by the familiarity of this bohemian, and the off-hand allusions to his great race went against all his taste, his pride, and his caste; and yet,—the man interested him!

And interest was a thing to which he was very rarely stirred.

Tricotrin looked after him with a shade of thoughtfulness on his features; then went on again with his work, laughing with his next neighbor, a noble Murillo-like woman, with all the rich old Gaulois blood in her clear olive cheek.

"That is a very singular person—your friend, what is he called. 'Tricotrin?'" said Estmere that evening to the French statesman Pharamonde. "A most striking-looking man,—the head of a poet, a marvelous head for beauty and power. What a wasted and misguided life must his be that he should be content thus with an errant bohemianism!"

"Humph!" said Pharamonde, who did not forgive the wanderer, being accredited to him as his friend. "I am not sure he is not the wisest man in his generation: I am quite sure he is the happiest."

"Is it possible for a wise man to be happy?" said Estmere, with a smile that was not ironical, but weary.

Some days later, he and some of his guests rode by the same route through the vineyards below Villiers, at evensong. It was the close of the vintage, and they reined up and drew aside, some four leagues from the château, where they encountered the procession of Bacchus borne along, in its relic of pagan worship, with all the old accustomed honors.

Patriarchal as the days of Palestine, classic as the

worship of Dionysus, with a thousand memories of old Gaul, and a thousand traces of the cultus of Greece and of Rome, the crowning feast of the grape-harvest came. The meek-eyed oxen, with their horns wreathed with flowers, dragged wagons that were laden high with the yellow and violet clusters, while before them, around them, behind them, crowded the laughing throng of girls and youths and little children, reeling under the burden of the fruit, shouting under their chaplets of late roses. It was like some Merovingian or Carlovingian triumph, when the kings of Gaul celebrated harvest, or victory in war; and the pageant moved to the divinest vintage ode that was ever breathed over the fruitful fields of France —music mellow as wine, full of intoxicating joy that the people caught in echoing chorus, and deepening now and then into the grandeur of a Te Deum, as though in thanksgiving to God who made the earth increase.

Involuntarily the riders paused and listened spell-bound to that harvest chant. It was played by Tricotrin where he walked in front of the oxen, in front of the foremost wagon.

On that wagon all eyes turned, and in its decoration all the choice blossoms and the gayest ribbons had been employed. For, throned high among the grapes, with a green crown of vine leaves on her head, and half-covered with autumn flowers, sat Viva—gloriously happy and triumphant, the universally-elected queen of beauty and of the grape festival; all her love of light and mirth and music and homage gratified; all her childlike adoration of display fed to its utmost will.

Estmere looked at her as the bullocks, nodding their heads under their garlands, drew her slowly past him.

"What an exquisite face!" he murmured. "That child cannot belong to the peasantry."

She heard and looked down from beneath her vine-canopy, a deep delight beaming in her eyes, an exultant pride laughing on her lips; then a blush of shame replaced the glow of ecstasy, her head drooped as if her vine-crown were a circlet of lead, her pleasure in the vintage feast was gone;—she had been seen by a great man among the people!

"More poison for her from them!" muttered Tricotrin, as he saw and heard; and for an instant there were discord and a break in the delicious melody he gave the villagers. In another instant the music broke forth again in all its silvery sweetness, but to Viva's heart the harmony was not so easily restored.

Estmere rode on, unconscious of the evil that he had done; and the procession moved away along the line of the river, while the glad tumult of the multitude echoed down the evening air.

"What an exquisite face!" thought the earl once more; and he sighed—a short, quick sigh. The fairness of women had been poisoned to him.

"Will you not dance, Viva?" Tricotrin asked her that night, when the vintage ball followed the vintage feast on the green of her little hamlet, and he played for the dancers in airs so bewitching that the stout-built, white-haired old priest could scarcely refrain from joining in the rounds and measures.

"No!" said Viva shyly and petulantly, with the color hot on her cheeks. She usually danced with all the grace of a fairy and the abandonment of French blood;—would have so danced all night, all by herself, if she had had the chance; but this evening the young boatmen and vintagers vainly pressed and entreated her. She was obstinate: she would not join them—nothing could make her; and the vine-garland pressed almost as heavily on her brows as real crowns on those of real sovereigns. Tricotrin looked at her earnestly several times, but he let her do as she would, and did not seek to persuade her.

When the innocent mirth of the young and the old—of the lovers who danced on the star-lighted turf, and the children who played at their mothers' knees, and the aged who looked on amused, and recalling the days of their youth—was over, and the planets were growing large in the blue sultry skies, he approached her where she sat listlessly under one of the lime-trees.

"Viva, what ailed you to-night?"

She lifted her head, and he saw tears swimming full in her eyes.

"He said I could not be of the peasantry! And I am *not!*—yet I live with them as if I were, and I have no name and no heritage!"

The words were violently uttered. As he heard them a look of pain went over his face.

"I have done all I could that you should not feel your loss; but that 'all' is little," he murmured. "Why should a stranger's idle speech move you thus?"

"Because he is so great! And I want to be great too. And he saw me riding among the villagers—among the common people!—as if I were some farm girl, some dairy servant!"

And Viva, a child still, though something more than childhood had begun to wake in her, pulled the beautiful grape garland off her hair and threw it on the turf, and stamped on it with her feet, as though it were the badge of ignominy, servitude, and opprobrium.

Tricotrin caught her arm.

"Viva, Viva, for shame! The people whom you scorn strove their best to pleasure you, and the peasant girls you despise yielded place to you without jealousy, and wove you that wreath in simple love and good will; and at the first light word from a great man you turn against them, and are ungrateful thus!"

The grave gentle rebuke sunk into the child's heart; her chest heaved with a sob, her face grew crimson with shame.

"I know! I know it is wicked; but I cannot help it. He thought I was beautiful; he said so; and he saw me among all the peasantry; he can think me no better than they!"

"If you be as good as they, as single-hearted, as patient, as brave under burdens—you will be nobler than you promise to be now!"

There was the first scorn and the first severity he had ever shown to her in the words.

Viva's fiery spirit flashed up under the lash.

"They are good as the mules are good! Just so stupid, just so plodding; only content because they know of nothing better than their yoke, and their pack-saddles, and their straw-yards!" she cried, vehemently. "I con-

not be of them—I know I cannot,—and that English lord said so. And if he meets me again he will never speak to me because he will always remember me on that grape-wagon!"

And her tears fell in swift tempestuous emotion as though foreboding some hour when that memory would rise up between her and the aristocrat whose notice had spoilt all the innocent joy of her vintage-feast.

Tricotrin listened with his face growing darker and more impatient.

"You are ungrateful! Ungrateful as a woman; who can say more?" he said, bitterly. "Why has he bewitched you? He is a cold man,—he is not even young,—he will never think twice of you!"

"But he looks so *great!*" cried Viva, unconscious or unheeding of the irritated pain in his voice. "And he is beautiful too, like that Arthur of England you have told me the legends of, with his blue grave eyes and his air like a king's!"

Tricotrin left her side and paced to and fro the grass under the limes; he was deeply wounded, passionately angered; but he would show neither wound nor anger to her. The creature that was wholly dependent on him, whom, were it his wish, he could cast back destitute upon the world, should never hear a harsh word from him.

Viva watched him one moment, pride and rebellion still strong in her: then all the child's better nature conquered them, she sprang to him and wound her arms about him in caressing penitence.

"Oh forgive me! I was so wrong—so ungrateful. Do pardon me,—do smile at me. I care for nothing else if you love me!"

He gently unloosed her arms from him.

"I forgive; I am not angered, only regretful—for your future?"

"And why for that?"

Were there ever young eyes that saw clouds on the Future?

"Because you know you are beautiful and have no mother; because you are proud yet are nameless; because you are among the peasantry and pine for a pal-

ace; because you are divinely natured in much, but have faults that may make your misery and your sin. Waif of mine! better I fear that you had died among the clematis!"

The words were infinitely tender and solemn in their sadness; Viva was stilled and awed by their grave sweetness.

"I know I am wicked," she murmured at last. "The people were so good to crown me; and you,—oh! how can I ever love you enough? But—but—was it indeed so wrong to be glad because I had beauty in that great lord's sight?"

"Oh! true to your sex!" cried Tricotrin, impatiently. "The dearest praise comes from the highest lips! Estmere will never think once of you; why waste thought on him?"

"I cannot help it," pleaded Viva, musingly. "He looks like a monarch; I do not know what it is, but his face has a charm——"

"Because you know him to be a great man!—if he were a vintager, Viva, you would never glance twice at him! I would have never believed, till I heard you tonight, that the first vain word that a stranger could speak would turn you against all the friends of your childhood. His one light compliment was ill worth your poor vine-garland. Though your future were to crown you as it crowned the slave Catherine, and the Creole Joséphine, you would look wearily back from your state as an empress to the time when that village chaplet was worn on your innocent forehead!"

Viva's tears fell fast, in remorse and in penitence now.

"My beautiful vine-crown! I was cruel—I was mad," she murmured, brokenly, as she lifted up the wreath in contrite tenderness, and touched fondly and regretfully the drooped tendrils, the faded leaves, the crushed freshness of the fair green diadem.

Tricotrin smiled mournfully:

"Yes, you were mad as those ever are who yield to the tempters of vanity and ambition. Your remorse can avail nothing. You cannot mend what you have destroyed, or recall what you have crushed. The bloom will not come

back to your grape-garland, nor your childhood come back to you!"

Viva lifted her heavy eyes to him; lusterless and brimming still with tears, yet sweeter in their grief than in their radiance.

"Ah, I hate myself!" she whispered. "I scorn myself more than you can ever scorn me! I am so happy, and you are so good, and all I do is to repay you with wicked words."

He passed his hand gently over her brow:

"Say no more! All my fear is, your future. The world will not forgive so easily as I. And now—talk no longer, little one. Good night!"

And he left her, and though the day had been long both in mirth and in labor, walked away into the dusky midnight rapidly and alone.

CHAPTER XV

"VIVA, will you come to Paris?"

He spoke very quietly behind her the next morning where she stood feeding Roi Doré and all his feathered serail.

All the barley dropped down in a heap to the hens and chickens:

"To Paris!"—the ecstasy of her face said the rest.

He smiled, a little sadly.

"Well, for a few days. The good woman Blaze Mévert goes up to see her son in hospital; you can go too if grand'mère can spare you. Ask her!"

The child flew off on her errand: Tricotrin looked after her with a musing doubt in his eyes.

"It may be for the best," he thought; "here she will only dwell on the boy's memory. There,—well! God knows what will happen. It will be a present pleasure at least for her; and a week can do her no harm."

The future was a thing with which he had never burdened himself: he concerned himself with the present. If the fruit in his hand were rich and sweet he never troubled himself with fears as to whether next year's orchards would bring equal blossom. It was only now for the first time as the Waif grew nearer womanhood that the question grew perplexing to him:—for it was the question now, not of his future, but of hers. The future of a girl, nameless, motherless, but for him homeless, proud as though she were the daughter of kings, and passionate in her desire for greatness! What could its portion be except the darkness of disappointed desire, or the false brilliancy of evil attainment? That either should become, hereafter, the share of the creature that he loved and sheltered was a cruel thought to him: yet he could not see how to avert both.

While she had been happy in his country life; while she had been a child to find her pleasures in a play among new-mown hay, in a sail in a cumbrous barge, in a gift of grapes from the vine, or of a fairy-story from a peddler's wallet, to make her happy had been very easy. Even now, if she had clung by preference to the freshness, simplicity, and freedom of rural life; if like himself all her sympathies and attachments had been among the people; if she had been satisfied with the warm and loyal liking of the peasantry who had been about her from her infancy, and—without her vain desire for alien things, for worlds which she had never entered—had found content in her own heart, and in his care of her, it would have been possible to have carried into her future years the sunshine he had shed on her early ones. But he knew well that an unfulfilled aspiration, a strangled ambition, an ever-struggling, ever-repressed longing, are as poison to the soul in which their stifled fire burns: he knew that to such a woman as Viva would become such poison is worse than death, such fire is an ever-devouring flame of hell.

Tricotrin, who had led so careless and so rich a life of laughter, meditation, indolence, labor, love, and wisdom intertwined to one harmonious whole, had never had in the whole course of that life a pain so keen, a fear so in-

tangible, as faced him now in the future of what, on the pure instinct of pity, he had rescued and succored without thought of the burden it might become to him in an after-time.

It was possible that some man might behold her who would be won by her beauty to lift her into that blaze of worldly power which she coveted. But he knew that it is not to the foundlings of bastardy, that love which is honor also is offered: and—even love with honor—if ever it were given to her, seemed to him a robber that would steal from him that to which he had the natural right. A right precious to him, though for so long he had only thought of her as a pet thing like a spaniel or a bird.

He started as the old woman approached him through the yellow leaves of the autumnal gourds.

"Is it true the dear child is to go to Paris?" she asked.

Tricotrin looked down on her with compassionate kind eyes: he knew the pang that it dealt to this aged soul.

"Well, grand'mère," he said gently. "Is it not best? Only for a week or two?—and a week or two will chase away this young hero from her memories. Now he is nothing to her:—but if she have naught else to think of he will gather, from absence, beauty and stature not his own. Tell me, does not your experience of your sex suggest the truth of that?"

Grand'mère sighed, and shook her white head.

"I dare say, Tricotrin;—you know in my girlhood, among my people, if one had a dream in the head, or a pang at the heart, there was the baking, or the washing, or the beetroot-hoeing, or the grass carrying, or the cow that was sick, or the calf that was hand-reared, always to occupy one, and thrust one's self out of the way,—see you? With the little darling—it is different of course. She has nothing to do but to dream."

"And such dreams are the highways to sin! It would have been better,—ten thousand times better,—if she had had the beetroot-hoeing and the farm-house cares. But between us we have spoilt the child."

"Tricotrin! *She is a little* born princess!"

"Born princesses without palaces ready for them are in a sorry plight. Viva is only—vain, ambitious, and thoroughly feminine. Those qualities are not confined to palaces"

"You always jest," murmured grand'mère. "But will you really take her to that terrible city?"

"That city is more terrible while it is seen through the mists of her unsatisfied longing. And she shall come back in a fortnight, at the farthest."

The still bright black eyes of the old woman clouded with the slow painful tears of age.

"Come back?" she echoed, as she turned away. "Never the same, Tricotrin, never the same!"

And on her there weighed a bitter foreboding:—she had seen three fearless hopeful young lives pass from her into that furnace of Paris, never again to sit in the light of her lonely hearth.

"Never the same!" thought Tricotrin. "She will never be the same, though she stay here for year after year. The aged will never remember that the youth which they love will escape from them,—will die out of their sight into its own all-absorbed ego."

Meantime the Waif herself grew wild with rapture: Paris suggested to her a beatitude that Paradise entirely failed to do. All her elastic and vivacious nature was loosened to ecstatic joy, in which both her young Faust and her King Arthur were alike forgotten.

True, she was going in a manner very different from her ambition: she was going with the homely wife of the miller, whose mission was nothing more elevated than to seek a sick son, a private soldier, in hospital: she was "going like a peasant" she thought wistfully, into that great blazing whirlpool of sovereignties and splendors. But the delight of it far outbalanced the minor drawback; and moreover her love for Tricotrin was so much stronger than even her ambition as yet, that when she was with him, no want or wish remained upon her. His influence was great on her; greater because rather suggested than ever forced; and in his presence all that was nobler in her awoke, all that was baser waned.

Besides, she was but a child, a child who had seen nothing, and to whom all the earth was glorious. Paris was the golden land: once permitted entrance to it all things seemed possible to happen to her:—even to its people finding in her the daughter of the old dead races of the throne of Gaul! To be claimed and crowned in Paris would not have been too wonderful an apotheosis to her triumphs,—as she dreamed of them.

It is said that earliest youth is so happy because its present is sufficient to it: is it not rather because the future is still an empire as yet uninherited, in whose unentered domain all glories and all ecstasies are possible?

It went to her heart, warm though wayward, to give pain to the old woman she loved; to bid adieu to the poultry and the doves, and the pigeons that plumed themselves all day long on the thatch of the shed, and knew her voice and their own names so well; to kiss the white cat for the last time, and know that for fourteen long days it must miss her when it mewed for its milk and its bread. But the joy of her departure outweighed her regret; and though she felt all that clinging to the only home she had known, which every young thing does when it first goes forth into its new and separate existence, the magnificence of the possibilities that she saw before her in that one word "Paris," stifled the emotion as fast as it rose.

She went, with scarce a sigh, with scarce a backward glance, away from the home of her childhood. Away—for aught she knew—forever.

The slow sail, miles down the river, in the early dawn to the landing-place nearest the town whence the diligence started. The posting-inn, with its busy noise and movement, its ponderous gilded sign swinging against the wooden grape-wreathed balcony, its chatter of many tongues. The dashing of the cumbrous vehicle along the sunny road, with the incessant flack-crack of the leathern whips, and the jingling chimes of the galloping horses' harness-bells. The stoppages by picturesque wayside cabarets, bowered in pear-trees golden with fruit, or chestnuts full of their spike-armored nuts, where

the timbers were old as the days of crusades, and the lichens all gray from six centuries' growth.

The night's sleep in an antique town, where a cathedral that was a Kyrie Eleison in stone uprose in the midst, with the low-peaked crowded roofs lying far down about its feet, as the worlds lie around the feet of God. The next day's repetition of the joys of the day past, while the varied scenes flew by like magic, and woods and streams, hamlets and convents, church spires and river bridges, were all left behind in the sunlight. The approach to Paris in the mellow evening time, through the beautiful broad road of Versailles, down the stony slopes of Sèvres and Billancourt, past the noble wooded heights of St. Cloud, and so into the city in its gorgeous night-beauty:—all that was tedious or irksome to others to her was one perpetual panorama of delight.

Viva was in enchantment.

In that warm, ruddy, luscious autumn, when summer heats stretched over the vintage-month, there were high festivals in the City of the World. Even as Rome before her, she, with her vast proletariate and her vast armies, lulled the hungry cry of the one with the feast and spectacle in which she celebrated the victories of the other.

There had been war, and successful war. The blood and the treasure of the people had been poured out on the African sands, and the tricolor had been borne aloft over thousands of quivering bodies. France had conquered, and was rapturous in pride: for the vulture of Greed and the skeleton of Debt were her trophies, and they wore to her eyes the shapes of the archangels of Patriotism and Honor.

There was a week-long rejoicing and ceasing from labor. The dumb brutes travailed in agony; the women went down into the depths of bestial vice to find their daily bread; the patriots and the thinkers were forced into silence in prison or in exile; the future was pawned to the Gold Devil, that he might gild with its happiness the present. But the song, and the dance, and the laugh, and the trumpet were all that were heard on the air.

In the first of those nights, when the populace was

mad with delight, when the long avenues shone with a million of lights, when the red white and blue banners tossed in the golden gas-glare, when the wings of the glittering eagles glowed in the ruby torch flame, when the air was alive with wild melody, and music burst from every nook of the city—in the first of these nights the Waif first beheld Paris.

She forgot all her woes and all her ambitions; she cared nothing whether she came as princess or peasant; she was in a delirium of delight, a trance of magic—this was the world! Oh, how rapturous a thing was the mere sense of living!—how endless a pageant the mere succession of years! So the child thought, wafted into the victory-drunk, flower-crowned joy of the city, and gazing over the throngs with her eyes like two stars, and her cheeks burning scarlet, and the breathless laughter on her happy parted lips.

CHAPTER XVI.

LIFE had no terrors, no darkness, no sadness, no peril in the sight of Viva; it was only one moving picture of changeless color and endless charm. There was nothing in her of the poet's melancholy, of the visionary's instinctive sigh for woes that are old as the world, and that keep their cruel time with every pulse that beats. Paris and she were like one another—gay, beautiful, volatile, vivacious, inconstant, ardent, glittering things, full of fond enthusiasm, yet full of fickle caprice, always willing to smile, never willing to weep, ardent in instantaneous worship, cruel from pure thoughtlessness. The city caressed the child, the child loved the city.

Her fair bright face, with its great dark radiant eyes, and the yellow hair pushed back under her little scarlet hood, drew every glance after it, in the crowds of the theaters, in the little wooden booths of the fairs, under

the trees of the public gardens, or beneath the lamps of the boulevards at evening. He was with her, she was sacred to the people; and all the flowers and flags and wreaths and toys that form the current of merchandise of such festal times were rained upon her.

But that which Viva loved the best was to see the throng in a street turn by one impulse to gaze at her. What made her pulse throb highest was to hear the men who looked noble murmur after her, "Is it a child or woman?—what a perfect face!"

The air was rife with adulation for her, but it was less dangerous than one voice whispering it in solitude; even as poisons that neutralize each other injure less than one drop poured alone. She lived with the good woman Mévert, high in a quaint old wooden house on the borderline of the Pays Latin; but she was with Tricotrin all the day, and all the long lustrous evenings. She was ecstatically happy, and he imagined her content; so she was, because, wandering through the palaces, or watching the grand people in their carriages, Viva already mused, "I have power because I have beauty. I will be great, too, some day."

He thought her satisfied with the lot he gave her, as she laughed on her buoyant way beside him; she was only so because, without reasoning why, she felt she should ere long escape from it.

Tricotrin, for once, was blind, and believed that which he wished to believe. Living in a poor little room with the miller's wife, she was happy, he believed, in the people's pleasures, in the luxurious sense of young life, in such music, such mirth, such festal sights as he could give her by merely bringing her through streets and gardens. There had been nothing inordinate in her desires; they were gratified by such mere change of place as this. Why should she not always be happy thus?

The man's own intellect, so richly stored, and his own soul, so catholic in sympathy, made him contented in the simplest form of life, so long as he had liberty, and health, and the beauties of the earth. Forgetful of the difference between a life that draws its pleasure from the mind within and the life that needs to have them sup-

plied by the world without, he saw no reason why she should not be happy thus also.

But Viva was dreaming a different dream. When she had been six nights in Paris, and three of them had been spent at theaters thrown open to the public in the Parisian holiday, a new and strong passion took possession of her. It was the passion for the stage. Nothing of all she saw, save the splendid pomp in the courts of the Tuileries, charmed her like the stage.

Her vine-harvest feast that she had scorned was a million times more poetic, more picturesque, more classic, more full of peace, and mirth, and beauty than aught she saw in the theaters. But to the child, the artificial brilliancy, the mock sovereignties of the drama were far more attractive; partly because they were novel, chiefly because they represented that phase of life which had a fatal charm for her, and gained that visible and public applause which seemed to her the choicest and the sweetest of rewards.

She was all in the wrong. Her imagination, although so fanciful, was barbaric, in its passion for show and for triumph; but her nature had been created thus, and nothing could have eradicated that one evil instinct from it.

The chief thing that enchanted her with the stage was this: she heard that actors and actresses were people whose origin was either totally obscured or confessedly very low; she saw them intoxicating a multitude, and receiving a public homage of whose real character she was wholly ignorant. She, who began to suspect that her fairy progenitors would never do very much for her, did not see why to her also this golden path should not open. She would glance at herself in the mirrors she passed, and would think, "If even I had not genius, I should have beauty!"

And her feminine instinct told her that the latter was the greater and more potent influence of the two.

There was one actress who especially influenced her—an actress who looked almost as young as herself on the stage, with a gay, innocent face like a cherub's, and the most graceful caprices that ever adorned the coquettish

parts that she played. She was a very great actress, very famous, very full of riches, very widely worshiped—one who ruined every fool that loved her with a laugh as light as a lark's song, and who triumphed in the height of her reckless vice as a conqueror in the altitude of his power. Of that Viva knew nothing whatsoever, but she heard the thunder of applause with which the public greeted her; she saw the crowns, the wreaths, the jewels that were flung in profusion at her; she thought nothing on earth could be so glorious as to be this enchantress whom they called Coriolis.

Coriolis's eyes—acute, swift-seeing eyes, though so lambent and so blue with their sunny laughter—caught the look of rapt adoration on the handsome young face under its scarlet-hood among the close-packed audience, and, well used as she was to homage, was amused and pleased with the child's rapture at her. She knew that it was the most sincere she could have, and she gave Viva one night a smile across the house that made its recipient as proud as though an empress had caressed her.

One day the child—wandering under the boulevard trees with her old friend Mévert, in a morning when Tricotrin had not as yet joined her—was touched lightly by the long white wand of a lacquey glistening in gold.

"Come to the carriage; Madame wishes to see you," said the servant.

Viva turned, and saw, looking out at her, the lovely cherubic head of her stage-sovereign. Viva—restlessly uneasy because Mère Mévert wore the quaint costume and white cap of her province, and she herself was dressed half like a gipsy and half like a girl of the old ages—went up to the equipage, breathless with wonder at seeing her deity in mere mortal guise and out in the daylight. She felt giddy, and incredulous of her own fortune. Could it be that this potentate, whom all Paris adored, would prove after all Queen Titania?

Coriolis leaned over the low door of her carriage.

"Child! You are an adorer of mine, are you not? Where did you come from with your picture of a face?"

"The Loire, Madame."

Viva, for the only time in her life, was shy; she was absorbed in gazing at the matchless tints and graces of her idol.

"Sprung out of the river?—a second Venus!" laughed Coriolis. "Do you know what a fortune you have in your face, little one? Here, take these; you are young enough still to care for them."

She put into Viva's hand some silvered, painted, glittering bonbon boxes, that were among the many purchases piled in her elegant carriage.

"Would you not like to come on the stage?" she went on, as the child tried to thank her as well as she could in her amazed entrancement. "You have got it in your face, in your limbs, in your smile. It is a fair life enough."

And the actress laughed. She—a lovely, soulless, sensual, airy thing, with a cherub's face and a kitten's folly—had found it so. She did not mean evil; she meant kindness in her way, in inciting the girl to follow her choice of it.

Viva flushed crimson to her temples.

"Oh, Madame! you think that I could?"

"Of course you could. Why not? With a face like yours you may have no more brains than a wooden Punch; you need act no more than a stick; they will run after you. Look! You are poor, I suppose?"

"I suppose so," assented Viva, with a burning sense of shame, and a glance at Mère Mévert's costume.

"Of course you are; you were among the populace. Well, come to me to-morrow, at that address, and I will see what I can do to put you in the way and show you to some impresarie."

"Ah, Madame!" cried the child, rapturously. "And I shall have all that applause? I shall have just such homage as yours? I shall become like you, shall I?"

"Become like me? Oh yes!" laughed Coriolis; but for the moment a shade of irritation clouded her gay forget-me-not eyes.

"If I thought so I would kill her where she stands."

Viva and the actress both started at the sound of the voice near them. Tricotrin had drawn near as the last

words were uttered. He put one hand on his Waif's shoulder, and with the other tossed the costly sweetmeat boxes back into the carriage. The eyes of Coriolis glittered with astonishment and wrath; she was a sovereign in her way, and a pampered one.

"Monsieur! who are you that dare——"

Tricotrin turned his flashing glance on her.

"A year ago I saw Jean Bruno—a maniac."

And without another word he forced Viva away;—far away down under the trees of the street.

She looked up at him piteously.

"Was *that* wrong too?"

His mouth quivered with rage.

"My darling, my darling! not wrong in *you*. Ah, God! why cannot they let you be?"

"But you said you would rather kill me than let me grow like her? What is she?"

"Woe to those who teach you what sin means," he muttered in his beard. "Viva—that woman broke the heart of an honest man. Would you not rather die, in poverty and obscurity, than do that?"

Viva hung her head in silence; she knew in her own heart that she would not.

"But she is so lovely," she murmured, "and such an exquisite life she must lead; and—and—I do so want to be an actress!"

"What!"—he moved from her as if he were stung; he seemed to see a bottomless abyss yawn beneath the light-dancing feet of the child that he loved.

"I do!" murmured Viva. "All those brilliant nights, those beautiful dresses, those jewels that they toss her. Oh! I should be so happy on the stage!"

His face darkened with hot wrath, with bitter disappointment; he had fancied her happy because she was with him!

"I have said;—I would rather see you in your grave!" he answered her.

"Why?" asked Viva, awed but undeterred.

How could he tell her?

"I thought you were proud, Viva," he said bitterly. "Fine pride! To desire to show yourself nightly for

gold! to-day bare your beauty to the populace! to be one living lie from the hue on your cheek to the passions you simulate! to be a thing whose graces, and features, and limbs, and laughter, the lowest cur of the people can gaze at or enjoy if he pay a few coins to your master! Noble pride truly!"

Viva, who had never heard from him that scathing irony of word and tone, was rather terrified than convinced. Her head dropped; she kept silence.

"But that exquisite woman!" she whispered at last. "*She* is happy?"

"That exquisite woman!" he echoed, with acrid contempt. "Happy? Oh yes! Possibly she is happy. Without soul, without pity, without honor, as mindless as any flower that blows in the breeze, but a flower that poisons all who breathe near it,—she is happy doubtless, because things without conscience or brain cannot suffer, because gold makes the paradise of such creatures as she! 'Exquisite?' Pshaw! have you lived amid nature not to be able to know what is false when you see it? The red of her lips, the flush on her cheeks, the white of her bosom, the tears and the laughter you by turns deem so divine—they are all lies! Lies like the life she has chosen to lead. Think of that woman's old age, think of her future; child though you be, cannot you feel *some* of their horror?"

He spoke with the more vehement bitterness of the things he could speak of to her, because he could not taint her young mind by all the truth of this lamia whom she took for an angel. It awed her, it frightened her; but it utterly failed to convince her. The actress, and the triumphs of the actress, had taken too deep a root into her fancy.

"Ah!" said Tricotrin, half fiercely, half tenderly, "you prefer a painted lie to an undecked truth? That is ever your sex's choice!"

He walked on in a silence which the child did not break; she was puzzled and keenly disappointed; he was wounded and roused to hot wrath with this traitress who must needs seek to taint and allure what he cherished.

Viva took courage at last to speak, though she felt the only fear of him that she had ever known.

"But the Coriolis asked me to go and see her to-morrow," she whispered, "at the place on this card, in the day-time, you know. May I not even do that?"

Tricotrin stopped in his rapid stride, and looked straight in her uplifted eyes.

"Yes, Viva. Go if you choose. I coerce no one's liberty. But—I do not share your life with that wanton. If you go to Coriolis you will be dead to me."

The girl's head dropped again; she was struck with the sharpest terror her fair caressed life had ever known. He waited vainly some moments for answer; then he asked her,—

"Which do you choose?"

She lifted her face eagerly, and he saw her lashes all wet with unshed tears.

"Oh you,—you! What should I do without you?"

His face cleared like a landscape from which the sun sweeps away all the storm-mists.

"That is well," he said simply. "And now,—let us go and look for some bonbons as handsome as those I threw away from you just now!"

Viva shook her head with a sigh.

"I am not a baby!" she said, impatiently, and a grave shadow was over her face, that no pageant of the streets, no passage of the troops, no Polinchinelle chattering his fun, no Dulcamara vaunting his wares at beat of drum, nothing of all the frolic and the glitter of the holiday-noon availed to chase away. In the audaciousness of her supreme ignorance she disbelieved that this woman could be aught save what the fair cherubic face of her avouched; and she looked back with passionate vexed longing to those golden gates that he had closed upon herself—the gates of an actress's career!

She is not the first, who, saved from hell, have thought that they lost heaven.

"Is this all that Paris has done?" thought Tricotrin. "To exchange her young Faust for the stage of Paris is a poor mending of evils!"

His spirit chafed within him; all his happy philoso

phies, which loathed anxiety, and sought mirth and serenity as the essence of existence, were jarred and dethroned by this feminine incarnation of Caprice which he harbored.

He felt a sort of despair before her future; he to whose strong and sunny nature despair had been unknown. Rich he could never make her; give her the life she coveted he never could; how then could he make her content, or even perhaps keep her from destruction? For Tricotrin knew her sex well; and knew that these passionate propulsions, such as hers, to wealth, and glitter, and luxury, are a hundredfold more likely to be the cause of a woman's fall, than the softer and more generous emotions to which their dishonor is sentimentally attributed.

He had answered her with a bitterness and a sternness wholly unnatural to him, because his powerlessness in this one thing stung him so keenly. For one solution only of the problem rose before him. She loved him with a genuine ardent love, if it were only the love of a child; she had grown infinitely dear to him in the past year—her loveliness beguiled his eyes, her grace bewitched his senses; and all his heart and his soul had kept so full of youth still through the warmth of his sympathies and the healthfulness of his life, that he, so young still in all the best things of youth, forgot he was not so in her eyes. Forgot it at times when the thought swept by him,—why should it not be possible for this bright bird to find its best-loved nest in his own bosom, there to be safe-harbored ever from the beat of the storm-wind and the swoop of the hawk? He never drew the thought out into full light from the golden haze of immature resolve and resisted desire in which it lay; but it abode with him, and grew daily stronger than he knew. It had moved him to the vehement and caustic satire with which he had retorted on her allurement to the pollution of the stage:—he had indeed scorned the traitress of Bruno, but it was as the temptress of his Waif that he abhorred Coriolis.

He had been unable to foresee, when he took the child to the gay follies of the gayest theater, that this woman, whose triumphs were more than half due to her sins,

would exercise so instantaneous and fatal a sorcery over the mind of a creature whom he would have thought far too proud to care for the tinsel luster and the false glamour of a dramatic career. To him, knowing the vain, cruel, criminal, sensual life of the lost wife of Bruno, the actress was no more than a marionette set in play to provoke a crowd's laughter: that she could be, by virtue of her smiling eyes and her enchanting grace, an angel in Viva's sight, was incomprehensible to him. Long doubtful whether or no to darken the sunny horizon of her thoughts by the knowledge of evil and misery, he was stung at last, by her persistent regret for her lost deity, to tell her the story that the Marseillais sailor had told him. He did not show her the guilt to which Bruno's wife had fled, but he showed her the heartlessness of that flight, he sketched to her the awful wreck of the man's mind, and the pathetic fidelity of his wronged love. Viva was volatile, careless, selfish, though in a soft bewitching fashion: he fancied almost, at times, that she needed to be scourged with pain to become, like Undine, a human creature to feel.

She listened, where they had stopped by a bench under the great Luxembourg trees, with her eyes full of earnestness, her face full of wondering regret. It touched her, this tragedy—if it did not penetrate very deeply.

"The poor Bruno!" she said softly, with a sigh of pity: she was always pitiful, when—she paused to see pity was needed.

"Well?" said Tricotrin gently, when the tale had been told. "Well!—which are your sympathies with now, your goddess Coriolis, or the sailor whom she wronged and forsook?"

Viva meditated wistfully, her head sinking down like a flower with dew in its bells.

"Of course she was cruel—she was wrong," she murmured. "But then,—how could they be happy? He was content with the life, and she was not!"

Even while the swift instinct of the child fixed with accurate aim on the one secret of the misery of so many wedded lives, she stabbed, in her innocent unconscious-

ness, to its core the generous and noble heart that gave her such unrequited tenderness.

Tricotrin rose quickly from their seat under the chestnut-tree.

"So! Discontent is pretext enough for disloyalty!" he said bitterly. "Well—what we allow to nations we must accord to women, I suppose!"

And he took her home in silence to her little city-nest, high in air, in the Pays Latin.

She knew that in some way she had vexed him, but she did not seek to find out why, with her customary caressing penitence: she, in her turn, was aggrieved because her fair idol had been cast down from her altar, and proved no longer of soilless ivory and of pure silver, but of common dark-stained clay. The actress had brought the first severance and difference between them; because, by the lips of the actress the voices of the world, the voices of sins that are sweet, had spoken to Viva.

Meantime, Circumstance fashioned her fate as it commonly fashions the fates of all, let prescience, and sagacity, and skill, and care strive how they may to shape them so that no chance or accident should ever have power adversely to affect them.

That night Tricotrin's heart smote him; he thought he had been harsh to the "little one." He rebuked himself for having so roughly brushed away her happy ideals; for having so ruthlessly shown her the corruption of what looked to her innocent eyes so divine. He had spoken on the spur of an acute pain, and of the fear that had filled him lest she should fall into the pleasure and passion-baited snares of a courtesan's career. He fancied he had been cruel to her, as he watched her sitting in the attic window, looking out over the sunset-tinged roofs of Paris with a troubled shade on her face and her hands lying listlessly in her lap.

Yet—if she deemed him cruel because he would not launch her on that life, he knew that she must continue so to think him. He would as soon—or sooner—have aided her to throw herself into the black Seine, flowing yonder under the old walls of the Palace of Justice.

He went up to her and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Well, Viva!—what good was it for you to set your heart on roaming with me, if the first yellow-haired woman you meet makes you dissatisfied thus?"

"It is not that," the girl answered slowly. "It is——"

"It is what?"

"Well—I was thinking if one would be like *her* through being wicked, it must be very hard work to keep good!"

Tricotrin smiled, a little sadly.

"You have found out that common-place? I do not dispute it. Evil thrives; and honor will not be wooed because she brings plenteousness. It is just this which corrupts the world, Viva,—evil pays well, honor will not be followed by mercenaries."

She gave a deep sigh.

"But *she* looks so happy?"—the question could not be general to her, she argued only from the personality.

"Happy! As a mollusc is happy so long as the sea sweeps prey into its jaws; what does the mollusc care how many lives have been shipwrecked so long as the tide wafts its worms? She has killed her conscience, Viva; there is no murder more awful. It is to slay what touch of God we have in us!"

Viva was awed, and was silent.

"Why does God let such things live then?" she asked, at the last.

"Ah, child! Why does God let the dumb beasts be born only to perish after lives of long torture? The marvel of creation is one we shall never solve on earth. But come! Those problems are too deep for your age. Let us go and see the last fireworks!"

The fireworks made her a child again; they were the end and crown of the long week of festivity, and they fell in golden showers and leapt in fires of every hue, till they were seen by those far away on the distant terraces of Saint-Germain.

The young uplifted head, with that glow and conflict of color reflected on it, as the sparkling rain of flame sprang upward and descended from the summit of the Arch, attracted many a glance near her far more than did the fire-play. With the lofty stature and the leonine head of Tricotrin behind her, as he guarded her from the

pressure of the crowds, she was a picture;—even to the picture-sated eyes of worn Parisians.

Among those who thus saw her were two whose gaze never left her face, so unconscious of their study of it, as her eyes followed the gay magnificence of the fireworks' display.

One of them was a man jammed in the dense press, into which he had accidentally been entangled—the man to whom Tricotrin had given his "chance." And he read her face with a hard eager intentness, as one who reads the lines of a book that he must commit to memory and use at need.

The other was a person looking wearily out from where his carriage was blocked, in a by-street, refused entrance into the Champs Elysées that was consecrated to foot passengers. He was an invalid, a scholar, a nobleman, a recluse of middle age; and the face of the girl with its brilliant tint, its careless happiness, its marvelous perfection of beauty, youth, and health, stirred him to a strong emotion, half pain, half pleasure.

The carriage was close to the corner of the street; its object had been to cross the road, but the mounted gendarmes had interposed. Tricotrin was scarcely a yard from it; its occupant leaned slightly forward and spoke to him.

"Tricotrin! Let your young companion come hither; she is not safe in that throng."

Tricotrin looked round, and smiled.

"Thank you;—you are very kind."

The offer had been frankly made; he accepted it as frankly, knowing well the speaker. Viva was lifted in an instant upon the seat of the equipage; and, as she thought to herself, if she had only not had that scarlet cloak on, with its hood half over her curls, who could have known she was not a young duchess? Her vexation about the cloak slightly spoiled her pleasure in the fireworks; she had not thought of it on foot, but in a carriage—it was so different. She would not have been much consoled if she had known how exquisitely picturesque that costume made her look. Viva, like many

of her sex, well as she loved her loveliness, would rather have looked greater than have looked beautiful.

She was occupied, too, in glancing at the owner of the vehicle; he was worn, pale, attenuated, plain of feature, though his countenance was one of great intelligence; he did not at all look like the knight-errant who was to take a dispossessed princess back to her rightful heritage, but he had an attraction for her because he was visibly of some high rank by his attendants, and because his weary melancholy eyes dwelt on her with so unmistakable an admiration.

She talked to him, in answer to his questions, with vivacious volubility; she was happy, elated, excited, and had an intense enjoyment in being so prominent in that grand carriage—an enjoyment only damped by the hapless scarlet cloak.

Tricotrin leaned against the door, and listened to her mirthful chatter—in silence.

"May I not drive you home?" asked the owner of the carriage, when the last of the fire-show was over. Tricotrin lifted the girl down on to the ground.

"No—those born to walk had best not learn the ease of equipages. Many thanks for your kindness and your courtesies."

The Duc de Lirà smiled wearily.

"That man is a character," he thought, as Estmere had done before him; "and the child—the child is like a summer-day in one's youth."

The next afternoon the same elegant equipage entered the Pays Latin, and its master ascended the five flights of rickety stairs to the chamber where Viva, after a long morning out of doors, sat on the boarded floor, cracking nuts, and tossing them uncracked to her old friend Mistigri, singing to herself a gay opera air of Ricci's, caught up from the streets. Mère Mévert was with her sick son; Tricotrin, on a smooth-planed plank of deal, was painting with that rare happy skill he possessed, smoking the while, and thrusting out of sight for the moment that vexed question, "what would become of her?"

He rose, and welcomed the new comer cordially, though with surprise. Viva dropped her nuts, and sprang to

her feet—to be caught sitting on the floor was worse than to have been seen in a scarlet cloak! But, his carriage apart, this stranger had so little of grandeur about him, was so grave, so unassuming, so dumb, as it were, before the dauntlessness and the pretty insolence of her own air, that Viva concluded he could have been nobody very great, after all, and heeded his presence but little.

Tricotrin, on the contrary, treated him with a regard he rarely showed to men of rank; he knew the worth of character when he met it, and this character was of pure gold.

Years before, in the wild, hot days of a midsummer revolution, he had seen it tested. The mob had thundered at the gates of a great hotel, and forced the bronze and brazen scroll-work in. On to the flight of steps that led to the entrance-door, when the court was filled with seething human life, there had come one weak and slender form, inspired with all the fire and the dignity of a great race in that one moment. The sickly and suffering Duc de Lirà had looked quietly down on the infuriated people with a look half contempt and half compassion. "You intend to pass my threshold?" he had said. "Very well. But it will be over my dead body. Now—advance!"

And Tricotrin, whose pulse never beat so high as under the wine-draught of revolution, and whose voice the insurgents followed as chargers the trumpet-call, hearing that quiet and gallant defiance, had turned on his own people, and forced them back at risk of his own life and limb, and scourged them with fiery words as pillagers and thieves.

The nobleman and the revolutionist had rarely crossed each other's paths since then. The career of the ailing, learned, secluded gentleman, and that of the adventurous, erratic, sunny-tempered bohemian, could have few points of meeting; but there had been ever since esteem between them, though the enormous divergence of their lives kept them far asunder.

The Duc de Lirà—last of a mighty race—oftentimes envied with a sigh the superb health, the careless joyousness, the liberty, and the wanderings of the man who

owned naught but his Mistigri and his Straduarius. He himself had been delicate of frame from his birth upward; and—for this solitary representative of his old legitimate line—there was but one creed, one king, one flag, possible; and he had no place nor part in the France of the present. Lonely are the men who are before their own time; but doubly isolated are the men who are behind it.

Restrained by a fancied honor from departing ever from the political traditions of his house, he spent his years in charity, in study, in travel, mingling little in the pleasures of his rank, not at all in their ambitions. He had never married; he had shunned the society of women; he was of a nervous and sensitive temperament, and now, even the presence of the gay and haughty child—foundling though she was—kept the great nobleman almost silent and almost embarrassed. For so long a period he had never heeded the fairness of woman; her beauty, her youth, her pretty audacities were like some startling revelation to him of all that he had missed and lost.

He stayed an hour or more, watching the progress of the painting, talking with Tricotrin as scholar with scholar, glancing always at the child. Her history he learned in a few words; and he wondered to himself what lordly or princely stock had given to this nameless Waif her royal air and her imperial grace. He offered her many pleasures; among them he invited her to go and see his house, a palace filled with the treasures of art that Tricotrin had saved from the mob's destruction. But Tricotrin gently declined all his proposals; he followed his visitor out down the staircase, and spoke what he would not speak before Viva.

"See here, M. de Lirà," he said, as they stood in the doorway. "You have just heard the little one's history. I have no riches; she can have none. What avail to give her tastes that cannot be gratified, desires that can only be wormwood? I let you come near her because you are a man of pure honor—she is safe with you; but I would scarce do so with any one else. Viva is a foundling; Viva must be of the people. She is ready enough now to rebel at her lot; ready enough in her innocence to throw herself into misery, if the misery have gilded gates that she

fancies are the portals of power. We must teach her content as best we can, or her future will be one of absolute wretchedness—if not of disgrace. I know well that you would be the last to push her one step nearer that; so,—understand my sole motive when I say, 'be merciful to the child, and do not suggest to her brilliancies she can never justly enjoy.'"

The Duc de Lirà listened and bent his head.

"God forbid she should be harmed; but—such a creature as that—Tricotrin, believe me it will not be possible to teach her contentment in poverty."

Tricotrin's eyes darkened with impatience.

"I saved her life for wretchedness then, or for shame. How can riches come with honor to a nameless, ownerless thing? You forget; men have hard enough work to emerge from the prejudices of your legitimate world, women are crushed to pieces under them!"

"That is true," said the nobleman, simply, and he went away without more words.

Tricotrin stood looking out down the narrow street, with its peaked roofs, and the sunset glimmering ruddily in the casement-glass. A band of blue-bloused workmen were coming along it singing cheerily; some boy-painters were laughing and talking over their thin red wine in the little cabaret opposite; in a window high above sat a pretty black-eyed girl stitching away at the rose-colored skirt in which she would dance at a barrière ball that night: it was all of the "people," but it was all bright and contented.

He crushed, ere they rose, both a sigh and an oath.

Ninety-nine out of a hundred would have been happy in Viva's place: why must she alone have this restless, ambitious, incessantly-aspiring, unconsciously-disdainful nature, which made her so ill at ease, so petulantly impatient of the life into which accident had thrown her?

Was it the irrepressible natural instinct of some patrician blood in her that thus worked in her soul and corroded her present peace by its desire for unattainable power? It might be:—who could tell whence she came, this child who thought herself born from the fairies? Be that as it might, it was true that she would never be sat-

ısfied as she was. And his heart was heavy within him, for his love for her grew very great.

After a while he turned and went within; he ascended the stairs and called to her: she came thrusting her head out of the gloom like some Old Master's Angel out of a background of bistre shadow.

"My child, he said gently, "you have seen some of the sights of Paris; but there are some still that you have not. Come and look at those now."

She came: he was more silent than his wont, and she wondered where he was going. He did not tell her; but he went first to a building, where within the entrance-way was a little iron cradle that swung on a pivot: just placed in it was a year-old child, naked and crying piteously; the cradle was just turning for the infant to be taken within. "That boy is a foundling, as you were, my Waif," he said softly.

Some streets farther on he paused again; a group of young students were reading what was written on the door of a hospital. "They are looking what operations take place to-morrow," he said, in the same tone. "There are six: six lives then that will suffer the torment of the knife, suffer it that they may still drag on existence, sweet to them, though they are poor and of no account."

Viva did not answer; the unusual seriousness of his voice awed and stilled her. He led her next to a long low shed around which a silent crowd was pressing.

"A dead body lies in there," he said to her. "A young girl not much older than you; who drowned herself last night in the Mare d'Auteuil. People have come all day to see if they could recognize her; no one has done so yet. There are lives that are quite lonely upon earth."

The child's face was grave and pale; she still answered nothing, but he heard her breath come and go quickly. He passed onward to a great dark melancholy pile, where the high casements were barred with iron: he motioned to her to look up at it.

"That is a madhouse for the poor. Among them is an actress, once as brilliant as your Coriolis. Can you guess what made her a maniac? she had an accident that spoiled her beauty, and when she first appeared after it the cruel

people hissed as loudly as they had adored her. She stood a moment under the storm of execration, then burst into frantic laughter. Her brain was gone from that night. She had been extravagant and vicious. Such women have many lovers and no friends. There was only the public asylum for her. Yet Coriolis now is not so great as this maniac once was."

Still, Viva said not a word: but her hands twined on his arm, and clung there closely in the fading evening light. He led her onward in silence through dark, crooked, wretched streets that she had never dreamed of; she had seen the Paris of pleasure, the Paris that was full of light, of wealth, of merciless gayety, of boundless recklessness; this was the Paris of crime, of misery, of famine.

Fetid odors met her like the blasts of poisonous furnaces; hideous outcries filled the air; ghastly shapes flitted through the gloom, of raving women and of starving men, and of creatures all unsexed by drink or guilt, who had nor womanhood nor manhood left: standing at the entrance of that Gehenna, where the love of that brutalized populace made him sacred, he felt the child, brave though she was, trembling through all her delicate limbs. He passed his arm around her.

"Viva, look well. Take that picture with you on your memory. This is how the mass of human lives in every city lives; they who of their own will sink to it may merit their hell, but thousands on thousands are *born* in such a pit of crime, of infamy, of agony as this, breathing its poisons as their first and only breath of life—and then the world can wonder that it reeks with sin!"

She shuddered, and clung closer to him, and hid her face upon his breast.

"Take me away! Oh, take me away!" she whispered. "How wicked I was to ever complain or repine!"

He led her home in the same silence; and up the stairs to where a wood fire burned cheerily in the little chamber: in its light he saw that she was very pale, her hair was heavy with night dew, her limbs shook still. He drew her to the warmth, and looked down in her eyes.

"Have I been cruel, my child? Your fever of discontent needed a sharp cure. Life lies before you, Viva, and

you alone can mould it for yourself. Sin and anguish fill nine-tenths of the world: to one soul that basks in light a thousand perish in darkness; I dare not let you go on longer in your dangerous belief that the world is one wide paradise, and that the highroad of its joys is the path of reckless selfishness. Can you not think that there are lots worse than that of a guiltless child who is well-loved and well-guarded, and has all her future still before her?"

Ere his words were done she had thrown herself into his arms, in an abandonment of emotion,—the loosened tide of all her pent-up wonder, grief, and fear. It was the terror of every young life that sees for the first time the hopeless and unnumbered miseries that fill the world.

"Oh! how wicked I was!" she murmured, again lifting her tear-laden eyes to the face that ever for her had the compassion and benignity of a god. "I—who am so happy! I—who have you to care for me!"

A beautiful light shone in his own gaze as it dwelt on her; he answered nothing in words, but he stooped his head and kissed her. To her it was only the old familiar tenderness of pardon and of sympathy; but for him it had a new sweetness—the sweetness of a new love.

As children dream by firelight, so he dreamt too in the warmth of the burning logs.

Her love for him was deep and true; the unrest of her very early youth would pass away; her fanciful desires were the caprices of an imaginative and but half-dawned intelligence; was it not possible that his pity on her when she had been naught to him might be rewarded now that she had grown dear to him?

Feminine natures were things so mutable; the fanciful ambitions of women faded so often and so happily in the dawn of their affections;—could she not find her pleasure as he did, in wandering over fresh lands, keeping ever in eternal summer?—could she not, as others of her sex had done, forget the desires of pomp and of power, in the sunny eyes and the murmuring lips of offspring that should spring up in her youth, like the white blossoms that encircle the scarce-opened blush-flower?

It was only a dream; but dreams, only, are fair,—till the dreamer awakes.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE dream remained with him all the following day: a day spent at Great and Little Trianon, where every graceful tree that grew tall and beautiful above the mossy sward, and every water-bird that splashed and floated in the weed-choked pools, whispered to Viva's fancy some mournful warning of the instability of power. She was in the mood to listen to the warning. The Trianon made her very thoughtful; she did not know much history, but she knew that one history which looks from the blue eyes of the portrait on the wall, and speaks in the yellow leaves of the old music, and steals down the gentle winds that stir the same boughs which once screened sun and heat from the white Austrian brow.

It made her thoughtful; but she was very happy lying under the odorous pines, and listening to Tricotrin's stories of that old dead time.

The thoughtfulness passed; the happiness remained when she was back again in the Pays Latin, in the little high cosy chamber, watching the simmering of a wonderful sweet soup she had concocted in Spanish fashion, after his directions, of potatoes, and wine, and fruit, and spices, bubbling altogether in a brazen jar.

"Shall we go to the theater, Viva, when we have tasted that olla podrida?" he asked;—they had gone to the theater each night that she had been in Paris.

Viva shook her head.

"And why? Theaters were your Elysium."

"They are nothing to me since *she* is not true!" murmured the child. "I could not bear to see her act again!"

"Chut! How can actresses be true, little one? They are always representing what they do not feel."

Viva shook her head again.

"I *thought* it was all true," she said softly. "Else I should not have cared."

She had been wounded in her tenderest point—her

good faith. She had believed in this woman with all her soul; she had identified herself with all that the actress had portrayed; that all this which had so moved her should have been false, made her feel cheated and despoiled; that the sweetness of that angel-face should have been only a painted mask, made her resent the theft, on false pretenses, of her sympathy and love.

At that moment, happily for the distraction of her thoughts, the soup boiled over; Viva was at once absorbed in its rescue. It was hot, sweet, strong, delicious, and, better than all, of her own preparation. She was just pouring it out when the door opened, and the Duc de Lirà entered in the twilight. Viva was incensed beyond measure!—ah! how mean a thing of the people she must look, she thought, her cheeks scarlet with the fire, her hands filled with a brass pipkin, her laugh ringing loud and long because the little round apples, stuck all over with cloves, bobbed so drolly up and down in the fragrant mixture! So she fancied;—little dreaming that the stranger was musing what a picture for Hebe she looked, and thinking that he would have given all he owned to be able to find mirth and pleasure in apples dancing on a frothy lake of wine as she did, and as Ben Jonson had done before her.

She did not attach any importance to the new-comer; she did not know his rank; she thought him cold, gray, silent, uninteresting,—not the least like King Arthur, or even the Prince Fainéant; but he had given her a seat in a carriage, and Viva was of the temper that made her always want to look her very best, even in the eyes of an organ-grinder that she listened to in the streets. Moreover, she saw that he admired her and studied her, though he said little to her, but conversed almost entirely with Tricotrin or Mère Mévert; and she had that thorough coquetry by nature which made her love homage, whether or no she cared two straws for the one who rendered it. To some, admiration is valueless, unless from those who in turn they also admire: but Viva was not so fastidious. She delighted in even the stupid open-mouthed stare of amazement at her loveliness, that a despised cow-boy would give as she passed the place where he lay among his grazing herds.

For she was feminine to her heart's core.

The Duke's advent spoilt her soup, and also spoilt her content.

Tricotrin saw that,—impatiently. Himself, he had both regard and respect for the grave, gentle, melancholy person whose dignities brought so little joy with them; but he wished the nobleman had not found his way to this attic, and he was perplexed as to his meaning in coming there. With less than his usual courtesy he cut the visit shorter than it would have been by bidding his caller farewell, and taking Viva with him to a Café Chantant.

The girl heartily enjoyed these things, and he loved to see her among them, since they were what he could easily bestow.

The music enchanted her; and the coarser meanings of some popular songs could not harm her, since she was in absolute ignorance of the construction put upon the phrases that evoked such laughter around her. She laughed, too, because the melodies were so mirth provoking in their airy and droll cadences, because the gas-lit scene was so pretty and exciting, because all those students and grisettes about her laughed so riotously; but the songs might have been in Greek for aught that she understood of them.

Then, when they were over, she sat at a little round table and ate her ices, and tasted her first champagne, and amused herself with the eternal stream of picturesque gas-lit life that passed before her, and went to bed just tired enough to fall asleep at once and dreamlessly. He had made her forget her own discontent: she was happy, and found that it was after all possible to enjoy one's self among "the people."

But fate undid all that he had done. The next day, in the dusky hour, Viva, left alone for a little while, sat in the window-seat reading by the lingering light a historical romance that delighted her—a romance wherein a herdsman's adopted daughter, after many vicissitudes, was proved to be sole heiress of the mighty castle that had frowned upon her from her birth. She was absorbed in it when the door was thrown open by some personage in

a glimmer of green and gold, and into the chamber, thus ushered but unannounced, came the most exquisite little figure she had ever beheld. The figure of a very small, very old lady, with the most delicate features conceivable, white hair, black eyes that still shone like stars, a profusion of laces, a gold-headed stick, and red, high-heeled shoes that clicked a musical patter over the bare floor.

A fairy at last! Viva rose, transfixed. "It must be Cinderella's godmother herself!" she thought; "there could not be *two* fairies like that!" And in an instant her imagination leapt back to her home by the Loire, and she saw Roi Doré changed into a beautiful prince, and Bébé into four white horses, and the pumpkins into gilded carriages, and the chestnuts into diamonds, and herself into——but her dreams were broken by the fairy's voice, imperious but kindly:

"Do you know who I am, my child?"

"Yes," murmured Viva, awed by this immortal visitant as she would have been by no mortal empress.

"Indeed! Who, then?"

Viva's answer was hushed and reverential.

"A Fairy! And I have hoped for you so long."

The lady looked at her in astonishment, then fairly laughed outright. She was not displeased; her old age being very lovely and delicate, it was neither distasteful nor inappropriate to be taken for a fairy.

"No, my dear, you mistake," she said, seating herself on one of the hard chairs. "I am no fairy, though I may do as well as one perhaps. I am the Duchess de Lirà."

Viva said nothing; she felt perfectly certain that she was right, that nothing mortal could be so exquisite, so small, yet so awe-inspiring as her visitant; but she knew how dangerous it was to contradict fairies when they wished to suppress their identity, and remained discreetly silent accordingly.

"Come here and let me look at you," said her visitant.

Viva obeyed, a little anxiously; how did she know but what her guest might change the brass pipkin into a chariot, and whisk her off through the open lattice?

Madame de Lirà turned her gently to the fading light, and her all over with inexorable scrutiny. Not

a single flaw could have escaped those ruthless and piercing eyes; but they failed to find one, and softened their gaze ere their inspection was done.

"Very well, very indeed," she muttered, as she loosened her hold on the child. "Of an exquisite grace, as he said; and surely not of the people."

Viva colored hotly as she heard.

"You are very pretty—nay, you are very beautiful," pursued the old lady, calmly and critically. "With another year or two, when your form shall have fully developed, you will be magnificent,—with culture and dress. I have heard all about you. You call yourself Viva?"

"Yes, Madame;" she was still thinking of all that she would get this fairy to do: first and foremost, Tricotrin must be made King of the World, and grand'mère must be given new youth.

"Viva! It means nothing, but it is not ugly. You could not have been baptized in a Catholic country, for there is no such name in the Saints' Calendar. Well, you are a handsome child; and I pity you, my dear. I will take you home to stay with me."

"To stay with you!" echoed Viva, in amazement. She had been a little bewildered as to why a fairy godmother should allude to the matter of a baptism at which she must have been the principal person present, and she did not think it according to elfin creeds to be very particular about the saints or their calendar either. But to go and stay with her, in her palace of cloud or of seacavern, was an instantaneous transformation about which there could be no doubt. Did she not know what Cinderella had gone to! "But I cannot. I dare not!" she murmured, in sudden remembrance. "I must hear first what he says. He was so angry about the young Prince; and I cannot vex him again!——"

"I thank you, my Waif!" said a voice from the doorway. "You have been faithful under trial, which Peter, whom men call Saint, was not."

The Duchess de Lirà put up her gold glasses at the figure she beheld—a figure very strange to her, with his linen blouse, and his great meerschaum, and his little

black Mistigri, who spoke in this careless fashion, and blasphemed the rock of the Church!

"Madame la Duchesse," he said, as he approached her with that courteousness which, frank to all men, was graceful to all women, "you are come to see my Waif? Nay, that is kind and generous. May I ask to what you were tempting her?"

The old Duchess gazed at him in silence; she had heard of him, but she had never seen him. She had expected a man of the "*bas peuple*," with whom she could have dealt in sublime condescension; she saw a man to whom even she felt condescension was not possible, and who had, even to her fastidious eyes, an air of race and of breeding undeniable.

Tricotrin turned to the child.

"Go to your room, Viva; Madame and I will talk alone."

Viva obeyed, though very reluctantly, and with many a glance at her fairy.

"There was no need to send her away," said the old lady, coldly. "My son is interested in her; he begged me to show her some kindness. It is to be regretted that a child of so much promise should be lost in such a life as this. I am willing that she should come and stay awhile in my household, that I may see if anything can be made of her——"

"Made of her!" echoed Tricotrin bitterly. "You mean, Madame, that you would amuse yourself with her while she is fresh to you, as with some new bird from the tropics; and then, when you have tired of her, have her trained for the opera, or cast off for the theater, as the bird might be given to sing in a public show, no matter whether its first notes were its death-knell?"

He spoke with unconsidered irony, on the sting of the impatient wrath that he felt that these aristocrats could never leave her in peace, but must ever try to turn her away from him at the very moment her heart seemed knit closest to his.

Madame de Lirà rose with that dignity which, in so fragile a form, had so awed the Waif.

"her it be ignorance or ingratitude on your part,"

she said, icily, "I do not attempt to decide. Your insolence is sufficient to frustrate all my efforts for the young girl's welfare."

Tricotrin's forehead flushed; he saw that he had been rude to an aged woman.

"I was wrong, Madame," he said, quickly. "Pardon me. It stings me to hear her spoken of as a thing to be bartered in, that is all."

"There is no question of barter," said the slow, gentle voice of the Duc de Lirà behind him.

His mother interrupted his words:

"My son, to comply with your wishes, I have done what has been exceedingly distasteful to me. The matter has concluded as I foresaw; take me to my carriage."

"Stay, Madame," entreated her son, reverentially. "The matter is but commenced. What has Viva herself said? The Duchess," he continued to Tricotrin, hurriedly, "came to invite the child for a month's stay with her, at my wish. Surely you cannot refuse such a——"

"I leave you to make your entreaty to your—friend!" said the Duchess, with her delicate, glacial sneer, that she did not spare even to her son. "The girl can accept or can refuse. But I must beg you to take me down stairs. Whether it be ignorance or insolence in this person I do not seek to inquire, at all events it is ingratitude, and strange neglect of that young creature's interests."

The last sentence struck Tricotrin with a pang. Was his love growing brutal in selfishness?

"Forgive me, Madame!" he said, rapidly; "I was rude to you. It stings me to have her spoken of as a thing to be traded in; but what is it you mean to her?"

The old aristocrat was softened from her wrath.

"A fine man, and gracefully mannered," she mused, as she answered, still coldly. "I mean well, as you may imagine. M. de Lirà interests himself in this child. She is beautiful; she is unfortunate; she occupies a terrible position in having no friend but yourself. I would rescue her from it if it be possible. M. de Lirà affirms that he himself answers for the truth of your story concerning her,—he has perfect faith in your integrity; and it seems to us——"

Tricotrin's eyes blazed like a lion's.

"Madame! I can hear no more words in that tone. Do you speak of us like paupers? 'A terrible position!' Why does Viva occupy a terrible position? She has been reared according to nature, and not according to art. Is that terrible? It is rare."

"It is impossible to converse with any one who demeans himself thus," observed the Duchess, frigidly. "I say 'terrible' advisedly. The position of any female child just growing to womanhood must be so with no friend but a man who states that he is not her father, and does not purpose to become her husband."

Tricotrin started, and the blood flushed his forehead as he heard; he paused a moment ere he replied.

"I am old enough to be the one, too old to be the other," he answered, at length. "But—I thank you for having shown me a danger for her that I had overlooked."

The old woman glanced at him with her piercing eyes, which had lost little of the keenness of their youth.

"The girl is beautiful," she said curtly, taking a sweetmeat from a silver box. He felt all that she intended to convey under that simple observation.

"Madame, I thank you," he said hurriedly. "You have recalled to me the world's skepticism of all innocence or honesty, and its ready credulity of all vileness! Forgive my late roughness; what is it you would offer to the child?"

Madame de Lirà coughed a little: she was hardly prepared for so direct a question, so she parried it.

"I offer her—my countenance. If she come under my roof for a few weeks I can better determine what will be for her real good hereafter. In any case you may be certain that I should do whatever was just, and give whatever social advantages she might prove herself to deserve."

He repressed a passionate oath at the insolence of patronage that ran through all the words: they were meant in kindliness, and out of justice toward Viva it was not his right to cast them back with all the contempt and impa-

at them in his soul.

," he said at length, and his voice was

hoarse and hard, "that you will play with Viva for awhile as with some new lapdog, or rare piece of faïence, and when you have wearied of her, cast her aside as you cast the dog and the china to the pages or the cabinets? Or,—do you mean a noble and humane benevolence, which will honor you more than all your charities and bequests to all the churches in the world? Do you mean——"

Madame de Lirà's sparkling eyes were gathering fierce fire, and she would have answered the audacity of such an arraignment by withdrawing, once and for all, her unappreciated condescension, had not the gentle voice of her son interposed.

"Tricotrin, you misapprehend us, I fear. It is at my entreaty that my mother has come hither to see what it may possibly be in our power to do for your Waif. Will you come aside with me, and let Viva return to the Duchess?"

Tricotrin shook himself with a gesture of intolerable impatience.

"For what? That she may be made more ill-content still with the life that is simplest, truest, and most innocent for her?"

Madame de Lirà rose from her seat.

"My son, oblige me by taking me to my carriage. You will be so good as to acknowledge that I was in the right when I predicted the outrage I should receive as my reward for gratifying your wishes against my own judgment."

"Outrage! By heaven!" cried Tricotrin, with all the headlong impulse of pain. "Would you admit the title of a stranger to claim one of your lapdogs? Viva has as much interest for me as your greyhounds for you!"

But the old Duchess had passed beyond the reach of his words, and was descending the crooked stairs to her equipage. A few moments later, her son re-entered the room. Tricotrin stood silent on the hearth, with the red blaze of the stormily setting sun shed full across him. He did not look up; he did not speak: the other hesitated a minute, then approached him.

"Tricotrin, you were surely discourteous to my mother?"

"Possibly."

"And you totally misapprehended her."

"That I doubt."

"The fault of her visit, if fault it be, lies with me. I have endeavored to interest her in Viva; I have succeeded in doing so. You must know that she can be a valuable friend if she pleases; and in this instance I believe she would so please. Are you justified in depriving the child of all the benefits she would derive from such friendship?"

"Benefits! What benefits? To be subject to the cold winds of caprice? To be the plaything of a fine lady's vagaries? To see the smile of to-day become the sneer of to-morrow? To be a patronized thing, on whom great people can vent at their will their variations of ennui and spleen? I perceive nothing in such 'benefits' deserving either of my acceptance or of her gratitude."

"You are unjust. We are not the heartless and frivolous creatures you would make us to be. If Viva——"

Tricotrin was not softened by the gentle words; they tenfold increased the unreasoning, vehement rage that possessed him; the rage born of pain like that of some gallant animal under a shot-wound.

"Viva! what of Viva? What has any living creature to do with Viva save myself? Because I cannot keep her in the luxurious wastefulness of a palace, can I lay no claim to a life that I saved? Because I found her nameless, penniless, ownerless, is that any reason why the first stranger that fancies her has stronger claim on her existence than I? Because a child's heated imaginations, and the poisonous whispers of fools, for awhile make her ingrate enough to despise the life that has sheltered her body, and kept stainless her soul, is that plea enough for me to surrender every right to protect, and every title to guide, her? 'She is ill-content,' say you! Good God! Was there ever a fondled thing that did not bite through the hand that caresses it? Was there ever a plant reared with care and with tenderness that an alien hand did not break off the flowering-crown when it blossomed? 'Ill-content!' A fine plea! Would she have been more content, pray you, reared in the public nurseries, where the children of bastardy are cursed from their

infancy up, for the crime of having come to the birth undesired and unwelcomed?"

The fiery torrent of words rushed headlong from his lips; the claims he never breathed to her, he flung out in the face of those who desired to rob him of her; the passion of his temperament, that slept under the sunny vivacity of his habitual nature, broke loose under the unbearable pang that it was to him, to have her thus sought and thus bribed. His impulses were hot and swift as volcanic fire, and he stayed neither to consider nor restrain them.

The Duc de Lirà listened with regret, but not in anger, for he knew the provocation that he gave; and he knew the justice of the resentment it awakened.

"Will you forgive me if I speak quite plainly?" he said at last. "Of course you have indisputable claim to all her love and fealty; indisputable title to defend and shape her life, howsoever may seem best to you. But what is it that does seem so? What is it you intend to do with her?"

Tricotrin's eyes fired like an angered hawk's.

"I deny the right of any one to ask the question!"

"Perhaps I have no right," answered his hearer, patiently. "Nevertheless, I do so. Listen, Tricotrin: if you project to make this girl anything more to you than she is now, say so, and I will not press a single word more on you. She *is* yours by right in that case: and none of a surety have weightier or nobler claim upon her heart or her future than you, who stand in the stead to her of every tie. But, if you have no such intent, and all you have hitherto said implies that you have not, you will scarcely be enabled much longer to continue your present relationship to her? Reflect, you have no parentage to her; can you be the sole companion and protector of her life without exposing her to injurious suspicion? Will the world give you credit for your disinterestedness, or her for her innocence? It has too little of either, itself, to do so."

"Pshaw!" broke in Tricotrin, with imperious scorn. "Have I ever lived for the world? That bugbear and scarecrow of the millions of fools, the breath of whose lungs is the lies off other men's lips? The world! What

have Viva and I to do with the world? We forget it; it can afford to forget us—a bohemian and a foundling."

"You can forget it: she cannot, she will not. For it will not forget her. Hear me out: you are just, you are true. You will admit a truth even when it militate against your desire. If Viva be not your wife, not your daughter, how shall you persuade others that she is not your mistress? If her love for you be not such as would make her happy in union with you, how shall you render her future content? You said yourself, a few nights ago, that, if ill-content, she must become of all women the most miserable. It is certain she will do so. You will attempt impossibilities if you seek to keep her womanhood in the same solitude that has made her childhood so joyful. She is ambitious, proud, quick to resent, eager to enjoy—is it for the child whom you regard so tenderly that you can determine to prepare a future in which all the darkness of an imputed shame, and none of the solace of an indulged love, will be her portion?"

"Oh God!"—the words escaped him with the stifled cry of a fierce suffering. He swung round and flashed his eyes over the speaker.

"You find strange eloquence! Are *you* her lover too?"

"You know me better than that," said the other, simply, with a gentle dignity that bore an unspoken rebuke in it. "A lover!—I! My years may be no more than your own; but I have none of your youth left in me. Left, do I say? I never knew it. No; I speak as I do merely from such interest in her as any one—not a brute or a libertine—must feel for a young creature of such promise. What I say sounds harsh and insolent doubtless;—but your justice will acknowledge the singleness of my motive. I have no title to dictate to you, no excuse perhaps for interference with you, but I do repeat this:—you, who are so anxious to guard her from every evil breath, you who have acted with so much nobility toward her in her defenselessness, must, for your own conscience' sake and the sake of her future, choose between one of two things. Take the right of marriage over her life, or do
and between her and my mother's protection of her.
one can know which of the two will best advance

her happiness and yours. Whichever you decide on, tell me;—and in either case believe me my friendship is yours if you will have it. A Lirà does not soon forget; I have not forgotten the July night in my Cour d'Honneur."

He passed quickly through the evening gloom, and out from the little chamber as the words left his lips; he was generous, sensitive, sympathetic, it had not been without fear and hesitation that he had spoken them.

Tricotrin, in his solitude, never stirred from where he stood before the wood-fire, whose flames were now the only light left in the darkened room. The chimes of a neighboring clock told off two quarters, with the strokes echoing through the open casement, but he did not hear them. He was lost in thought.

The mercy he had shown was bringing its reward—in bitterness.

"To have the fate of Bruno!" he muttered, dashing the falling hair from his eyes that looked gloomily down into the leaping flames.

To take from gratitude what would not come from love;—to gain through innocent tenderness what would not be given through riper passion;—to bind to him in its wax-like malleability what, when it changed shape with older years, would recoil perchance from his clasp;—to claim the sweetness of kisses by the plea that the lips which he sought had been fed by his bread,—these were what he would do if he chose the first of the alternatives presented to him, if he cheated her and himself into the faith that a child's affection was a woman's love. And these done, what would be their end, their sequel?

The freshness of winds and waters, the changes of motion and rest, the sound of a song on the air, the glow of an alp in a sunrise, the tire of toil among vine or olive or millet, the play and the pleasure of sinew and muscle, the bright shock of sea-water in a leap from the rocks, the careless zest of free days untroubled with thought for the morrow, the frankness of welcome from the grasp of the mountaineer or the eyes of the girl-gipsy,—all these made his life rich, made it happy, because with them also he had the heart of a poet, the liberty of a man. But she,—her fancy panted for power; her scorn recoiled from this

simplicity of joy which, being far above her, she deemed lay far beneath her; the frail strength, and the languid senses, of a girl's youth could not grasp the warmth, and the force, and the rapture which he could feel from the mere life within him, and the mere life around him. The happiness he had he could not transfer to her. She would lie in his bosom, restless as a bird restrained by a captive hand; she would ache and sigh and grow weary for the things of wealth and of pomp that he could not bestow; and then—and then—to those sighs some other would answer; and across his life would be the blackness of dishonor and desolation.

He beheld her future and his own as in some mirror of prophecy. He could make her his own—yes; as the hand that has fed and fondled the tame hare can stay the trustful creature as a captive when it comes for a caress. But scarce at less cost than the fate of Bruno for him,—of Coriolis for her.

And yet—he loved her with all the power of his tropical nature; loved her with a new and sudden love, since the day that he had flung her young Faust from him. To let her go from him, to let her drift to others, was torture to him.

With unconscious violence he struck his clinched hand on the iron of the stove by which he stood.

"My God! For the first time in all my life I wish——"

The wish died unnuttered in his throat. For the first time in all his laughter-lightened years he wished that a thing done, that a choice made, in his earliest youth could be undone, and be reversed. These were the rewards that his tenderness to a foundling brought him,—futile regret, and vain desire!

CHAPTER XVIII.

He stood there still, in the darkness, with his clinched hand resting on the iron; a light swift movement came near him, a gay laugh echoed through the silence.

"I could not stay in the dark any longer. Have you sent my fairy away?"

The thoughtless words thrilled through his soul as Viva came to him: was the jest symbolical of a terrible truth? Was he, in his own selfish covetousness of her, driving away the influence by which all the colors of glory that she dreamed of might bathe her life in their radiance?

She, all unconscious, came nearer still, and put her hands upon his arm.

"Was she a fairy? I have been thinking since it might be foolish of me to fancy her so; and yet,—she looked so exactly like one, and nothing but a fairy could have promised me all she did!"

"What a child you are!" he said impatiently, with an accent in his voice that she had never heard before. "Fairy? No! Do you suppose fairies are real things?"

"Grand'mère does," said Viva, gravely. "But do tell me, why did you send her away? May I go and see her? If she be not a fairy she must be something very great; and—oh, those diamonds on her fingers when she uncovered her hand to feel my hair!"

He shook her clasp off him and walked to the window:—his heart was full of tenderness, anxiety, yearning, pain, and contest for her sake;—and she thought of the glitter of jewels on a stranger's hands!

Viva looked at him with a little sense of fear; then glided down on to the floor, and leant there in front of the stove, with the light from its open door playing fitfully all over her picturesque limbs.

She began to think he was unkind;—he had sent away her Faust, her *Coriolis*, and now her Fairy.

It was some time before he spoke to her; then it was gravely but very gently.

"You thought me harsh to your actress, Viva?" It seemed an irrelevant question, but it sprang from his own train of thought. Viva looked into the embers.

"Yes," she said truthfully at last: she wondered how he knew that she was thinking of Coriolis.

"Do you deem her justified then in the blow she dealt to her husband?"

He stood behind her; and she could not see the intense anxiety that was in his eyes as they were fastened on her.

She took thought a moment,—then she answered him with her golden head dropped on one side in meditation.

"Justified? No. You say nothing wrong is that; and it was wrong in her of course. But,—you see I can fancy what she felt. He had the sea, and the storms, and the boats, and the other fishermen,—and he was born for it too, and chose it himself. But she,—she might love him all the same, you know, and yet she might hate the life, might she not?—feel the cabin stifle her, and the days go slowly, and the great waters look dreary, and so, grow half mad, never seeing the world that she wanted to see. It was wrong, because he loved her you say, and did all he could, and could not help being poor. But still for her; —ah, it is so hard never to do what you want to do! It made her wicked I fancy; and then she grew cruel; and forgot that he would suffer, because she went to enjoy!"

He heard in silence, then moved from her back to the open casement: he was answered; and each word had gone through his heart like the thrust of a knife.

Her very ignorance of the extent of the sin made her pleading for its excuse more pregnant with meaning to his ear. Unconsciously to her, her sympathy with the actress was prescience for herself.

Viva sat silent some moments gazing into the fire, too absorbed in her own thoughts to note that he had not replied to her. She started as his voice, after awhile, came again through the gloom from where he leaned by the little lattice.

"You justify infidelity and ingratitude! Well, they *are accursed* sins in my sight, but it may be I am too *harsh to them*; it may be they grow ingrained in women!"

"Oh, no! I do not justify them!" cried the child, as she sprang to her feet, frightened and grieved. "What do you mean? What can you think? I tried to say—only I say it so ill—that what she did was heartless and guilty, but yet she could not help doing it as it were, because the weariness in her life drove her to it. Now look! —how I love grand'mère, how I long to see the little kitchen again, how fond I am of Roi Doré, and Bebé, and the pigeons, and all. And yet!—so wicked I am, so shameful I am!—that I *know* if you take me back and leave me there month after month, year after year, I shall grow so impatient of them every one, I shall so long for excitement, and light, and music, and applause, and all that one hears and sees here in Paris, I shall so hate that still even life with no change in it save the change of the leaves from green into yellow, that—let me try how I may—I shall long for that glitter and renown on the stage as she did. Do not be angry with me; it is better to tell you the truth; and how can I help what I feel?"

He gave a sharp quick sigh as he heard the words poured out in half-penitent vehemence:—how was he to hope to keep happy and innocent, since he could not keep it in riches, this nature that panted so wistfully for forbidden and unattainable things?

"I am not angered," he said wearily, "and God forbid I should blame you for truthfulness. But, I see plainly your danger and my duty. You must tread a path, high and bright in the sun of the world's smile; or,—or—my child, you will live to curse me that my feet did not stamp the life out of you when that life was scarce more than a butterfly's among the flowers!"

Then he stooped, and touched her lips with hot swift kisses, and put her gently from him, and went out alone into the shades of the autumn night.

She, awed and contrite, stood bewildered in the glow of the burning wood, with a vexed impatience on her beautiful quivering mouth.

"What could he mean? He grows so strange!" she thought, restlessly beating her foot upon the boards. "And he never told me now of the Fairy!"

"Viva!" said Mère Mévert from the doorway. "Viva,

here are some chestnuts the greengrocer below us has just sent you. Look what fine ones!"

Viva took them without attention, but they were so large and so tempting that she interested herself in setting them on the embers to roast, and as she watched them in their cooking laughed and talked with the good woman, and had forgotten all her wrongs and her woes, as she peeled off the shining brown skins from the white fruit within, and dipped it down into the salt.

She had no care but what the chestnuts consoled: what did she know of the great soul that suffered for her sake?

CHAPTER XIX.

He did not return all the following day.

Viva, accustomed to look to him for all her amusements, and impatient to hear more of her Fairy, grew restless, peevish, wayward, and full of impatience.

It was a glorious sunshiny autumnal day, and she had to spend it all in-doors. The woman Mévert was with her sick son, Mère Rose busied with a full household. Viva tried all her occupations, to fling each away in discontent, and spent the chief of her hours beating her rosy fingers on the lattice in petulant wrath at her detested detention. As the day wore on into evening she grew very angry, like the spoilt child that she was; and deeming herself injured by such unwonted neglect, worked herself into a chafing rage at her captivity; which at sunset she varied by gliding unperceived down the stairway, and seating herself on the wooden step of the door,—a forbidden seat that she was resolute to occupy since she had been kept imprisoned from sunrise.

Some momentary anxiety touched her as to what could have kept him away; but she believed devoutly in his

omnipotence, and her chief sensation was fiery anger at her own disappointment.

"He is cruel—cruel!" she said feverishly to herself. "He will not let me go to Coriolis, and he sends even that lovely old fairy away! He is cruel!"

And she felt that for once she could rebel against him without scruple.

A caged linnet sang above her, shaded by a lime-bough: a pot of autumn roses shed their fragrance near her: the sunshine was playing brightly through the picturesque old alley—but she found no pleasure in anything. She was restlessly flinging away the gold treasures of her childhood in reckless eagerness for the mirage of her womanhood.

"If only he would let me go to the stage!" she thought, with wistful vehement longing. "He says I must tread a high path, why will he not let me make one for myself there?"

The words that he had spoken had made a deep impression on her capricious mind: they had startled, touched, and moved her; but she was capable rather of feeling vividly and passionately, than of feeling for any very long duration. She was at once intensely childlike and intensely woman-like; and she had all the fervor of the first, with all the changeability of the latter, temper.

"Souvent femme varie, fol à que se fie," was never truer in its unmerciful statement than it was of this bright changeling; but with her as with most of her sex, though the needle of her fancy veered round so many times and with such swift alternations, it never long ceased to point to the one pole star of her own vanity.

The pageant of the stage had allured her with fatal power: the blaze of a public recognition wore to her all the luminance of a heavenly apotheosis; she panted to be great:—as a young leopard, captive since it was a cub, pants for the freedom of the forest and the riot of the chase:—and she could see no other way to greatness. He told her that the way was thorn-set, and ended in a Lake Avernus; but she disbelieved him with all the assured audacious obstinacy of young ignorance, and she

thought,—if only she could find it out, and pass upward by it, and smile at him from the eminence to which it led!

The poison had entered her soul: and although he had thought that he had drawn out all its virus, it had sunk too deeply for any antidote wholly to act against it. Moreover, the face and the grace of Coriolis had seduced her imagination; and no warning, no counsel, no statement of fact could dethrone this sovereign of her fancy. Through Coriolis she had had a glimpse into the one world that attracted her; the one life that to her looked well worth the living: her thoughts recurred to her lost paradise again and again and again. But now with more dangerous force: for they were nursed in silence. She had learned not to speak of the thing that lay nearest her heart:—there is no surer sign with any youthful thing that its consciousness has come, and that its innocence is in peril.

A few noons before she had sat on the sill of the little window, impatient to go out into the sunny noisy street below. She had wondered why the grisette, who a few days before had been sewing so merrily that rose-colored skirt, now worked without song and with her head drooped so low.

"What ails thee, Therèse?" She had heard the girl who leaned out beside her: and the dark-eyed worker had dropped her head lower over her labor.

"Lulu is gone to study in Rome!"

"Ah, bah!" the consoler had cried. "There are plenty more students as good as Lulu: and besides—he will come back."

The grisette had shaken her glossy head with a smile as sad as tears.

"They come back from Rome—yes: but back to what they left—never."

And Viva, with a dim perception of what her meaning had been, felt her heart ache for the speaker, and had watched her with a dreamy interest, half sympathy, half scorn.

"Why care for a student?—if it were a king now!" thought the patrician foundling. "Still!—it must be very sad to love like that, a creature who does not care,

but only goes away, gayly, to his Rome and to his pleasures!"

She was being quite as cruel as the painter Lulu: but she did not dream of applying the lesson to herself.

As she sat there, fretting at her durance, doing nothing, thinking herself cruelly used because she had missed one day of sunlight in the streets and gardens of Paris, she looked now and then up at the opposite window, where the grisette sat at work. She saw how tearfully the stitcher's eyes drooped over the heavy work; how wearily yet how tenderly the sewing-girl stooped over and again to a little wooden cradle at her feet; how listless and full of pain was the wan faded look of the face that the sunset light only lit to make paler still: and she felt vaguely sorry for the sorrow that never had touched herself. Yet she thought, half in contempt, half in compassion:

"I would not sit weeping there;—I would go to a Rome of my own, and make myself happy with somebody else!"

Of the love that sees all the world centered in one single life, Viva had no conception. It looked as foolish to her as a bee would have looked, which, finding one flower yield it no fragrance, yet should have clung persistently to the one cruel and sterile blossom, rejecting all the thousand odors of the thousand other roses round it.

Instinctive egotism is ever instinctively philosophical.

As she sat there in the sun, with the striped awning over her head, and the carol of the linnet on her ear, there came to her a dainty little page, all scarlet and gold, like a little gallant from the galleries of Versailles, with his hat in his hand, and a profound obeisance that would have done honor to a prince. Viva started and colored at the sight of him: then, mindful of her dignity, sat still and regarded him with a mingling of curiosity and command,—her memory went to her lost Faust: this dazzling baby-servitor looked just like such an emissary as he would have sent.

He bowed again, very low to her.

"Mademoiselle, my mistress entreats to see you once more."

"Your mistress!"

Viva's heart beat loud; her cheeks flushed crimson, her thoughts sprang instantly to the truth:—earth held for her but one woman.

"Madame Coriolis,—she begs to speak to you," continued the little page. "Her carriage waits—at the end of this passage-way,—she trusts you will do her this honor?"

Viva pressed her hands to her heart, to still the choking sob that rose in her throat at the recollection that she must refuse this by every law of duty, of love, and of obedience.

"I cannot, I must not!" she murmured. "It would be so wicked!"

The page, regardless of her words, pressed his message on her: his mistress only craved a word, his mistress never was answered by a refusal, his mistress was accustomed to have her own way and will at all times.

"I cannot, I dare not!" pleaded Viva, losing all the memory of her own dignity, and ready at every word to burst into tears. "He has forbidden me: he will never speak to me again if I go to her. I long to come,—I do indeed,—but how can I disobey him? He is all I have in the world,—he is so good, so noble, so generous;—it would be so hideously wicked to rebel against him!"

The baby in scarlet and gold suppressed the immeasurable scorn that he felt, and proved himself a delicate tactician. To live in the service of the actress was to live to do her desire, by fair means or by foul. He entreated, he beguiled, he argued, he begged for his own sake, and he counseled for her own, in language so well chosen, that, when backed by the seduction of her own wishes, it proved only too powerful with Viva.

"It is only to speak to me, it cannot be much harm?" she pleaded with her conscience, as she cast a hasty glance back into the house. The two women were not there to see; Tricotrin was away, there was no fear of detection; and,—who knew what she might miss forever if she flung this chance away untried, if she threw this offer away untested?

"I will go!" she said breathlessly, casting her red cloak that lay behind her over her head, and fleeing fast down the street, as fast as though she fled from temptation.

She knew that she was committing a great sin; she knew that she was doing what was base, disloyal, and cowardly, since she would not have disobeyed him thus, save in his absence; she knew that she was false to every better thing within her. But the temptation was too strong, the allurement was too glorious in hue to be rejected; she felt vile in her own sight, yet, nevertheless, she went.

It was the transgression of every law of love, and honor, and duty, and pure faith, that bound her life: it was the casting away by deliberate act of all the sweetness and the safety of the guardianship which environed her; it was the oblivion of his gravest counsel, and the defiance of his tenderest desire: but the passion for glory that possessed her, for the glory that to her was embodied in the form of Coriolis, was stronger than every other feeling in her. She blindly followed where that ignis fatuus led.

Panting, trembling, growing pale and scarlet by turns, with expectation and her own consciousness of evil doing, she stood by the closed carriage from which the face of her angel looked out, in the little antique darkened street, through which the evening light was wandering in rich, deep rays of blended color.

"You sent for me?" she asked tremulously; and looking up in this woman's sweet azure eyes, she thought with all the noble, senseless, vain, generous obstinacy of youth that her intuition must be more true than all the experience of others, that with this fair bright face no sin could go!

"You little fool!" said Coriolis with a smile. "Why did you let that man take you away from me the other day?"

Viva grew very pale; but she gave an honest answer.

"He says you are very wicked, and he would rather see me dead than like you!"

Coriolis laughed aloud; a silvery musical laughter, happy as a child's.

"He is complimentary—your friend! Well! do you believe him?"

"I ought," murmured Viva, wistfully and piteously. "But I cannot! I think you are an angel."

Coriolis laughed afresh: the ingenuous simplicity of reply did not touch her to pity, merely to amusement.

"Think so if you like," she said, "and I will be your good angel. See here, little one, I was in earnest when I offered to help you to a career. I can make you the fashion in a night, and I will do it if you have any sense, and are any way tractable. You have a splendid head—I tell you so—I was not handsomer myself, I verily believe. A creature with a face like yours can always have the world at her feet. But not if she be shut up in a garret where no eyes see her. One may as well be a sparrow as a kingfisher, if one never glitters in the sun under men's sight. You are a kingfisher. Well, come and fly in the light, do not mope in a wicker cage. I will take you with me, and show you my world,—come!"

Viva, white to her lips, and trembling sorely, looked up with appealing eyes.

"Do not ask me, do not ask me!" she cried, piteously. "He says he will never share me with you, that he will never look on me again if I go with you! I would give all the world if I had it, to come—but I dare not grieve him; I dare not!"

"Pooh!" cried the comedian. "What are women made for but to plague the souls of men? It is our empire, that—of course he likes to keep you in prison, all jailers love power."

Viva shook her head.

"Oh no, no! You do not know him; he is so good, so generous, so gentle. He would never tell me anything but for my happiness. He fears you because he thinks you are so wicked, and he says that you broke that poor sailor's heart with your cruelty."

Coriolis set her delicate teeth, and a slight flush heightened the bloom of art on her cheeks; but she smiled with amused negligence, and took the means which she saw would be the surest to blind the child's instinct of right.

"Your friend calumniates me: a very general crime. It is the penalty we pay for our eminence," she answered. "Sailors! have I aught to do with common seamen? He

errs strangely: but we will show him his error. Come you only with me,—just for these next few hours,—and I will make a princess of you. He shall see you on the throne of the world; for is not the applause of all Paris that? and he will thank me, and worship me as your best friend. Look you, little lady;—he is poor, this Tricotrin of yours; you are a great tax upon him, you are a burden that serves him in nothing. Have you ever thought of that?"

"Never!"—her head drooped, the remembrance was a deadly blow to her pride.

"But it is the truth nevertheless. Now, if you will trust me, I will make you great, applauded, courted, powerful, above all, independent. And what is there so sweet as independence? To go where one will, to do as one chooses, to have to ask naught except one's own fancy, to scatter money where and when and how one pleases! Ah, try that! you will never endure dependence after it. You have a proud face: how can you bear to eat the bread of charity?"

The child was stung to the quick; the merciful hand that had saved and sheltered and succored her, looked now like a glove of iron, whose clasp froze her blood.

Coriolis saw the pain that she inflicted, but she was pitiless to it.

"You are nothing but a young pariah, a young pauper now," she continued. "If you will come with me we will change all that. You will leap at a bound into your proper sphere; you will become rich as well as famous; think then how you can repay this man whom you love, whereas now you are only a care, a weight, an expense, an onus upon him. Have you remembered all this? Come!—just to see for two hours what my empire, what my world, are like. You shall return at nightfall: I will send you home; and I will take care that he hears at once that you are with me,—I know where he is,—and he will be too just, I trust, when he sees my desire to serve you, to continue to think such false and such evil things of me."

"Oh, yes! I know well that he would, if he would but believe!" sighed Viva; and a beautiful vision arose before her, of her idol purified in the sight of her friend,

cleansed of calumny, and beloved by him as well as by herself, in all the radiance of that new world for which she pined. It was a child's vision, all glorious with colors never seen upon earth, generous with all the fanaticism and chivalry of youth, vain and self-confident with all youth's headstrong bigotry and ignorance. Every warning had died out from her remembrance. Coriolis was in her belief at once the noblest empress, and the noblest martyr, that the world could hold.

"You shall make him believe," said her temptress, indifferent what she averred, so that she became successful in her caprice of divorcing from the man who had offended her, and aroused her hatred, the only creature that was dear to him. "Come with me,—at least for an hour or so? You are no baby, that you must have no will of your own. You are old enough to act for yourself; and you must act if ever you desire to be great. The years are few that a woman reigns: she cannot afford to waste one. Come with me; and you shall see what my life is like. I will give you a glimpse of it to-night. I will metamorphose you into a young sovereign,—you are nothing now but a little peasant. You want costume, jewels, lace, trailing skirts, everything! All those embellishments are to a creature like you, as its gold setting is to an emerald. Without them you may be a gem indeed, but you are unpolished, and will glitter in no regalia. Come! you cannot be afraid? You look brave enough to take your own way, and adhere to it. If you listen to him you will pass your whole life in an attic like the one that imprisons you now; you will never be seen except by some clowns on a farm, or some boors in a tavern; you will never wear anything better than linen and serge; you will always go on foot and have others
u with the mud of their chariot wheels; you
s sit at your lattice window to see the world's
pass by without you; you will always be ob-
ure like a wretched mole under a tree, when
effort of will, one touch of sense, you might
ed all that, and been as great as I am. Only
fool,—only think what it is that you do!"
lor had changed many times during the utter-

ance of the actresses's conjuration; her breath came and went rapidly; her whole form was tremulous with emotion and desire. "To be obscure!" It was the one hell that she dreaded. "To be great!" it was the one heaven that she craved. To be one of those who "sat at their lattices" in the quietude of an humble home, while the great pageantry of life swept on below her window with no place in its carnival crowds for her, no voice of hers in its laughter, no banner amid its proud standards upheld by her hand, was the future that she feared with a passionate terror—the terror of inborn ambition, of predominant vanity.

With a single bound her foot was on the carriage steps, her hand upon the carriage cushions.

"I will come!" she cried, breathlessly; shame was on her, and all the consciousness of sin against the one to whom her lifelong allegiance, and her uttermost sacrifice were due. She felt the burning horror of some great wickedness consume her, she knew that she wronged him in his absence—a crime and a cowardice in one. But the temptress prevailed with her; the desire for the unknown conquered her; her idolatry of this one forbidden thing was stronger with her than all ties of gratitude.

"I will come!" she cried; while in her ear there seemed to sound the words that he had spoken: "Share your life with that wanton, I will not."

"That is right, that is wise," said Coriolis, with a smile, as she drew her up into the carriage. "You are a baby no longer; you have a woman's divine right—Self-Will."

Viva did not hear; her eyes felt blind, her senses grew dizzy, her ears had a singing sound in them. She could have sobbed aloud with remorse, and fear, and contrition; but the guilty joy of victorious rebellion, the guilty sweetness of unlawful longing near to its fruition, the guilty liberty of self-emancipation, were in her veins, and there was too much in her of the leaven of Eve for her not to deliver herself up to their usurpation. She knew herself treacherous, faithless, cowardly; but curiosity, vanity, and the desire of pleasure conquered her conscience. She elected, as millions wiser have chosen,

to turn her face aside from duty, and follow where her sorceress led.

The equipage dashed off with her; and if conscience spoke, it could not be heard in the noise of the flashing, whirling, azure wheels that swept her down white roads and under green avenues through the gold and bronze gates of the actress's villa.

Coriolis was not without her kind impulses; she was of a sunny temper, and could be generous when to be so did not interfere with her own supreme selfishness. The rapt adoring face of the child had attracted her, and she had felt a fancy to see it closer. But beside these she had motives less innocent: one, on whom her own charms had palled, but whose contentment and patronage were essential to her, had also seen that "flower-like face" under its scarlet hood, and had bade her let him see it once more, and more closely. And Coriolis was one of those women who own but one cultus and one passion —those of gold.

Viva's heart was beating at fever heat as she followed her enchantress through the exquisite miniature palace, in which the stage-sovereign reigned. The knowledge of her own sin in coming thither, her terror for the rebuke her flight would draw down on her head, the sharp stinging sense of a criminal action that seemed to prick her like an iron goad, served yet, in some fashion, to render her ecstacy in her own transgression wilder, and sweeter, and stronger. She had done very wrong, she knew that; but she had rushed forth into perilous liberty; she had seized the forbidden fruit; she had entered into the unknown land; she had too much of the spirit of Eve in her not to take delight in her daring deed. Moreover, glancing around on all the luxurious beauty that blinded her, she thought: "She was unknown and penniless once, they say; why should I not become like her, too?"

In this lay Coriolis's charm for her:—that the actress was to her the incarnation of all that may be accomplished by the force of beauty alone, against every antagonism of origin and of circumstance. And of the price at which such accomplishment was attained, Viva knew nothing.

"Come in hither," said Coriolis, leading her into the

daintiest of dressing-chambers, that made the child think of an empty bird's-nest she had once seen in an elder bush, all silvered over with glistening hoar-frost inside and out.

"Let us look at you," pursued her hostess; and she remorselessly pulled off the red cloak, and shook down all Viva's hair, talking in a pleasant little murmur like a singing-mouse all the while herself. Coriolis was a woman without any sort of mind; she was almost as absolutely brainless as any parroquet; but she knew human weaknesses well, and she knew how to flatter them; and those two forms of knowledge suffice to conquer a child. They suffice, many times, to vanquish a man.

"Have you sent to tell him, madame?" asked Viva, a pang of conscience stirring amid the bliss of her intoxicated vanity.

"Your friend! oh yes," said Coriolis; and Viva did not know that the daily bread of such women as this lies in falsehood.

Coriolis asked her all her history, and Viva told it; the sense of shame at her costume, and her homely dwelling, striving with her own conviction that she belonged to some lineage of special though hidden splendor.

Coriolis heard and laughed.

"Ah, ha! It is always out of such as you that women like me are made."

"Is it?" asked the child, breathless with hope and joy, unwitting the frightful truth that lay in the words.

"Is it? Of course it is!" cried her temptress. "The world is against us as we start, and we have our revenge; we trap it, and strip it, and make it our laughing-stock and our golden-granary both in one. You do not understand? Pooh, little one! You will learn all this fast enough. Oh, life is a pleasant thing!—you may believe that. Look here! since I—since I came on the stage, have I not lived like an empress, and eaten like a Strasburg duck, and dressed like a fashion-plate, and had jewels that outshone the duchess's diamonds, and seen all the world turn after me as I drove or as I walked? To be sure! It is hard work at first, perhaps;—but not for a beautiful woman. I am beautiful; you will be so. When

a woman can look at her face in the mirror, and say honestly, 'I am handsomer than one in a million,' it is as good for her as if she said, 'I am born to a crown.' Better, indeed—because it is a much gayer time that waits for her. Do you see?"

"Yes," said Viva, drinking the poison in as though it were the water of life.

Coriolis believed what she said. To a creature without soul and brain, the lusts of the flesh, and the joys of the palate, and of the vanity, are all in all.

Coriolis was honest;—she enjoyed.

"Stay an instant, and you shall behold yourself as you will be," she pursued, as she threw open the door of one of her cabinets, and pulled out laces, and silks, and velvets, and gems, till the girl's eyes were dazzled.

Viva felt none of the prescience which usually awakes in innocence that is brought into the presence of vice. There was nothing of warning mingled with the allurements exercised over her. She had no idea of aught of evil or of danger in her sorceress; she saw an exquisite thing with a cherub's face, and the power, it seemed to her, of a magician; and every one of Coriolis's movements fascinated her with a sense of wonder, attraction, and delight.

"As this woman was, she might herself be one day!"—this was the one thought that enchained her.

Laughing, and keeping up her silvery, mirthful babble that was like the ring of sleigh-bells over snow, Coriolis, who had much of the infant in her and much of the fool, and who had as many caprices as a spoiled marmoset, loosened and tossed aside with disdain Viva's white linen dress, and threw over her one of her own costly trailing robes, and all the fantasy of a jeweled court costume. Her hands were quick and agile at such transformation; and she changed her in fifty seconds from a little picturesque bohemian, to a magnificent young beauty; while gazing at the alteration in the long mirrors that fronted her, touched herself to know if she were awake, and gazed, with parted lips and throbbing temples, at her own apparition.

"There!" cried Coriolis, laughing more and more. "Look

there! See what Dress—the god and the devil of women—can do for you. Dress—dress! Why, child, your beauty, without the aid of costume, is nothing better than the pearl before it leaves the oyster-shell. Will you go back to your shell, you pretty pearl? Not if I know aught of your heart."

Viva made her no answer. All the self-love of Narcissus held her entranced.

"I am as beautiful as you!" she cried, at last, aloud, in ecstasy, throwing her arms above her head.

Coriolis turned away, with a cloud for once over her smiling azure eyes.

"More so!" she said, shortly, with the impulses of frankness at times natural to her. "More so! You have what I have lost!"

Viva did not ask what this was;—she did not inquire at the price of what loss this celebrity, and this wealth that she coveted, had been acquired. She was absorbed in contemplation of herself. The actress looked at her, and smiled; her own passing emotions had swiftly vanished.

"How it runs through us all!" she cried. "With all the love one has, one never loves anything like one's self! What a supreme joy it is—that knowing one's self fair! But there is a still greater joy than that: it is to hear the world say so. Do you see, you charming bagatelle, how happy you are?—you are beautiful! You can scoff at all the Cæsars; their power is nothing to yours. To be handsome while one lives, and to die before any of *that* fades: if one can do this, one can laugh at all the priests and all the sages!"

And she laughed yet again, and Viva joined in her laugh. The airy paganism suited the child's temper, and Coriolis was that most persuasive of proselytizers—a disciple who believed implicitly in the doctrines she inculcated. To be fair all her years through, and to die before any of "*that*" waned and withered, was to Coriolis the perfection of human existence; and the only form of dread that ever weighed on this careless, thoughtless, mindless, shameless thing, was the terror that the day should ever come when she should dash her hand through

her mirror in despair at the lusterless eyes, and the lined brow, and the dulled tresses it should give back to her vision.

Viva gave a deep sigh as she heard.

"Ah!" she murmured, "if I could only have ten years of a life like yours I should be content!"

"To resign it? Not you. Little one,—when we have tasted triumph we have fed on a fruit of Olympus, that makes all mortal food flavorless, and leaves us with a cruel craving appetite, never still!"

Coriolis had heard a poet say this: and used the answer, as one picturesque and likely to be persuasive to this young listener and tyro.

"What matter!" cried Viva, in the magnificent recklessness of ignorance. "I would rather taste it once and hunger forever, than never know its flavor all the days of my life!"

Coriolis, with a curious fancy for this daring, vain, lovely creature, who made her think of her own childhood, laid both hands on Viva's shoulder, and looked at her with a gaze that was more earnest than her volatile, sparkling, wandering eyes had ever given.

"Are you too good for it?" she murmured to herself. "No. Not a whit. You are just what I was;—cleverer perhaps, and of more wit, but just like me. You would only break an honest man's heart, if you were to begin with one: it is better to commence as you will end, with pillaging fools and knaves. Pooh! you don't understand," she cried aloud, with all her gayety. "You are a little simpleton. Listen; I will put you on the stage. You will have talent, I can see. If you have not, it will matter nothing. Walk well, dress superbly, do strange things—the odder the better, and with your features you can make your fortune, though you can say no more than a squeaking doll at a fair."

"But I want to be *great!*" cried Viva, dissatisfied with her future prospects.

"Nonsense! When a woman passes down through a crowd, and the people look back after her and call out, 'that is *she!*' has she not greatness, the best greatness? Some Latin idiot says, they have told me, that the

'pointing finger' is no sure sign we are great—Ridiculous! When it points *our* way we may be pretty sure we are on the highroad to fame. Besides 'great, great, great!' What does that matter? What matters in this world is to eat and drink well, and dance, and play, and laugh, and see others perish in envy of us, and have more gold than we can take up in both our hands, and enjoy ourselves while we are living. That is what matters. And no one can do all those better than a beautiful woman. Now go you in there, and wait till I come to you. I will not be long."

She pushed Viva gently through a door that opened into a small cabinet, and closed the door upon her. It had been very late in the day when she had met the actress; it was now evening; the little chamber was softly lit, and full of the perfume of flowers and the luxuries of wealth. Viva dropped down on a couch, and wondered whether she were awake or dreaming; a sense of fear and a great remorse stole on her; she knew she had done wickedly, and a vague, indefinable dread of some unknown evil came over her. She began to grieve for her disobedience, and to long to be safe in the little attic with Tricotrin. What would he say! what would he think!

Her throat swelled; she felt as if she must scream out loud; even the elegance and the fragrance of the place added to its strangeness and her own fears:—instinctively her hand wandered over the rich silk of her robe, and her eyes watched the glisten of its gold embroideries, seeking consolation in these. They brought a certain solace.

"If I could only wear them always!" she thought: and the vision of herself upon the stage, before the world, covered with flowers, welcomed with tumults of applause, intoxicating multitudes with her grace and her glance in all the triumph that she had seen attained by Coriolis, arose before her, and numbed all her repentance.

The desire to be "great" possessed her: when that insatiate passion enters a living soul, be it the soul of a woman-child dreaming of a coquette's conquests, or a crowned hero craving for a new world, it becomes blind to all else.

Moral death falls on it; and any sin looks sweet that takes it nearer to its goal. It is a passion that generates at once all the loftiest and all the vilest things, which, between them, ennoble and corrupt the world; even as heat generates at once the harvest and the maggot, the purpling vine and the lice that devour it. It is a passion without which the world would decay in darkness, as it would do without heat; yet to which, as to heat, all its filthiest corruption is due.

"I shall be great!" thought Viva, to whom the greatness of the stage looked as the greatness of an empire: and remorse ceased to touch her. They must suffer that she might ascend:—this was the reckless reasoning of the human and female egotism within her.

A flood of light startled her as the door was flung open and Coriolis entered; freshly arrayed, and with her fair feathery hair lying lightly on her shoulders, diademed with flowers and with gems. She floated to the child with her soft swift undulating movement—the movement of the born *almàh*, in whom motion is poetry, and in whose limbs lies eloquence.

"Thou art in the twilight, little one!" she cried, using the familiar and caressing "thou" for the first time. "Come:—I have a better light for thee than that; and one in which there are eager eyes to behold thee. Come!"

"Where?" asked the tempted one, with wistful wonder.

Coriolis smiled a little bitterly.

"Hush! We never ask 'where' in *our* world,

> On va où va toute chose
> Où va le laurier et la rose!"

And she drew the girl from the chamber, with her soft, white, dimpled hand clasped on Viva as though it were a glove of steel.

The roses had all cankers at their cores, and poisoned the lips that kissed them: the laurels were all twined in with thorns, which drew blood from the brows that they wreathed:—what of that? Cankerless roses die also; and there are no laurels whose fruit is sweet.

She led the child in its ignorance to perdition: but she did not think so: vice was fair in her own sight, and the

devil of gold was her god;—a good god who enriched those that served him: she thought she could do no better than bring a neophyte to believe in her cultus, and serve in her temple.

"Enjoy—enjoy—enjoy," her heart had whispered in her own childhood, when she had sat on the lonely seashore and longed for a world that was unknown: and she had enjoyed, and it seemed well to her still, and the sole thing that it was worth while for a mortal to do. In tossing the fruit of desire into the child's young bosom, she only gave that which had been luxuries to her own lips, and which seemed to her still the one apple of life worth the plucking. She was wicked, because things all sense and no soul must be so; but she was honest, and she only led where she herself had ever gone, with tuneful swift feet, rejoicing.

"Evil, be thou my good," she had said, in her fair, wanton, indolent, careless fashion, and evil had been her good; it had served her well, heaped wealth on her, made the air she lived in full of laughter, and the lovers she sought facile to their yoke, and the years that flew over her head, sunlit and short and radiant with mirth. Evil had been prodigal of gifts and graces to her, and had recompensed her as kings recompense; she deemed that there was no better master upon earth. Virtue was a niggard tyrant, who left his servitors to starve: but Evil was a prince, who scattered gold and flowers with both hands.

There be those who in their gilded shame feel the shrinking scornful passion, at their own fall, of the poet's Egyptian harlot,—

"What is Life without Honor?
And what can the life that I live
Give to me I shall care to continue, not caring for aught it can give?
I, despising the fools that despise me,—a plaything not pleasing myself,
Whose life for the pelf that maintains it, must sell what is paid not by pelf!
And the fancies of men change. And bitterly bought is the bread that I eat,
For, though purchased with body and spirit, when purchased 't is yet all unsweet."

But there be also many others in whom this sting of scorn is dead, this ache of conscience is lulled to rest by the opiates of vanity and of pleasure; there be those to whom the life that they lead looks the best life, and to whom license is precious, to whom enjoyment is the Alpha and Omega of existence, and to whom the chime of golden coinage is the only music of the spheres.

And Coriolis was one of these. She had been very weary, and fretful as a caged bird, in innocence; in vice she rejoiced and was free! A future might come indeed when she would perish of famine on the stones of the streets:—what of that? They must have some soul in them who dread a future; and there was no soul in this gay airy thing, though her dancing feet trod the souls of men down and killed them.

Like Dorat she had gathered every flower except the Immortelle: and the one that she had passed over she never missed.

Immortality!—the word is ridiculous named in the same breath with such things as Coriolis; what has eternity to do with women such as this, too foul for heaven and too frail for hell?

She led the child through dusky fragrant passages, aromatic in odor, with the sheen of silk and satin glimmering in the shadow from their walls.

Then she drew back, and sweeping aside a curtain that hung before an arched and opened door, motioned to Viva to pass within before her.

It was the entrance to a banqueting-room.

Viva, touched for the first time with a chill of timidity, a throb of fear, hung back, wistful yet longing.

Through the arch of the gilded portal there were a blaze of light, a glisten of rose color, a splendor of gold, a wilderness of flowers, an odor of wines and spices and burnt incense, a gay laughter from young men's throats, that all blazed and whirled together upon the girl's wondering eyes and ears.

She paused, hesitating and half frightened before that paradise of forbidden evil.

"Is it a temple?" she murmured breathlessly.

Coriolis laughed; a more cruel laugh than any that had rung from her mocking lips.

"A temple! yes! Go in,—and worship our god."

And she thrust the child through the opening.

CHAPTER XX.

It was toward the close of the day when Tricotrin returned.

He was tired out, heated, exhausted; as his habit was when in pain, he had wandered far, walking on and on through the open country, seeking solitude on the same impulse as the stricken stag. In the red woods of the late autumn, in the wide fields, with their arc of purple angry sky, in the bleak plains swept by equinoctial gales, he could breathe, think, resolve, kill passion in him, and call back his strength. In joy, this Arab little loved the oppression of cities, the pent confines of chambers, the close atmosphere of crowded roofs; in suffering, they maddened him. They were like the bars of his den to a caged lion whom his jailers wound and taunt.

By evening-fall he returned; the linnet had ceased to sing under its plume of lime; the sunbeams had ceased to play through the little brown dusky street; in the doorway stood the woman of the house looking up and down, with her head on one side like a robin's, and the bright dress of her native Basque province glowing in the shade like a poppy growing out of a pile of black timber in a wood-yard.

"Is the child not with you?" she cried, as he drew near.

He lifted his head wearily.

"With me? No. I left her at home."

Mère Rose turned pale under her ruddy southern skin.

"Left her here! Where is she then? She is not gone with the Mevért—that I know—we have not seen her

all the last half of the day, and we made certain that you had taken her."

He said nothing, but pushed past her and sprang up the staircase.

He threw door after door open, the house ringing with his voice as he called her name aloud from cellar to attic; —there was no answer. Her books, her bonbons, her knot of autumn daisies, lay on the table in the little chamber; but of Viva there was no trace.

The woman, joined by two or three of her neighbors, stood listening below, frightened and bewildered. They had no love for this fantastic child, "la demoiselle," as they called her ironically, who held herself so haughtily with so much airy scorn above them and theirs; and who either sat aloft in her casement like a framed picture, or glittered out in the sun, with the negligent grace of some elfin thing far too good for the earthly shrine that inclosed her. But they loved Tricotrin with the faithful impassioned love that all the populace gave him; and for his trouble they sorrowed themselves.

They felt a certain fear of the look on his face as he descended the stairs and came to them.

"When saw you her last?" he asked them.

They had seen her at the doorway some hour in the afternoon, they told him; they could not be sure of the time; they were busy people, occupied with their washing, their ironing, their cooking, their flower-making, their sweetmeat-baking; they had had no time to take further note.

The grisette, sewing still by the fast fading light at her lattice, looked down; moved by that sympathy which makes strangers become in a second as friends of a lifetime.

"You ask for the child?" she said to him. "I can tell you,—the little one sat there on the doorstep as four o'clock sounded; a little page, a creature all red and gold, came up to her and took her away They went together down the passage to that first corner yonder; and after a little while I heard the noise of fast wheels and the trotting of horses. She is gone,—that I know,—for she never came back to the doorway."

Then, without interest to see how her news was taken, she bent again over her work, to save the few precious moments of dying light; rocking the wooden cradle with her foot, and coughing, painfully, a short hard feverish cough. A month before she had sung, as blithely as the linnet under his lime-bough, the mischievous students' wine-songs that had served her as cradle-ballads.

Tricotrin heard:—and he drew a deep shuddering breath, as a soldier will do when the bullets have struck him.

"It is Coriolis," he said in his throat,—then without another word he swept the eager women aside, and passed down the street with the speed of the wind.

At the turn of the alley into the breadth of the street adjoining there came at a quick pace a string of young horses: they were from Normandy, and were wild and strong, and, being young, fleet of foot.

He knew the man who rode their leader; a sturdy Norman breeder of cattle;—they had been friends for many a year, smoking and sauntering and laughing together, under the spring-blooming apple orchards of the pleasant farm-country.

Tricotrin caught at the rope bridle of one of the foremost colts.

"Will you lend him to me?" he asked, breathlessly. "I am in sore need of haste: he shall be back by dawn."

"Take him!" cried the Norman, startled, like the women, by the look which he saw on a face that he had never beheld before clouded with aught of care. "Take him; and keep him as long as you need;—I am at my old stables; you will bring him there."

"Surely,"—he stayed for no more words, but threw himself across the colt's bare back, and urged it at a stretching gallop through the crooked streets of the quarter.

The young horse, nothing loth to be free of the string, flew fast without urging.

Tricotrin turned its head straight southward, to where the actress rested in her gilded harbor, rich and soft with the plunder of many lofty galleons that had struck flag and foundered under the pirate's prow.

He had spent no time in speech; he had wasted not a

single moment in self-abandonment to the anguish that possessed him. But as he rode his heart was a hell within him: he was not alone a man who went to rescue from his spoilers a child that he cherished, he was a lover who went to save from dishonor the creature that he idolized.

And he knew that he might reach—too late.

The Norman colt, with its rough mane flying and its bright eyes full of flame, asked no more welcome task than to be let loose to its fullest speed, as though it were once again at play in its own native pastures. Buildings and throngs, and all the varicolored evening life of the city were passed by as fast as a summer breeze sweeps by over the corn; yet night was down ere he reached the outlying woods and gardens amid which the toy-palace of Coriolis reared its gilded cupolas and shining roofs.

The colt was panting and tired out by the pace at which it had been ridden; it stood passively while he flung himself from its back and tied the halter to the post of an entrance gate. The gates were unfastened; he passed through them, and up the grounds of the villa, strewed with the damp odorous leaves of the late autumn. Lights glistened through the interstices of the shutters all over the frontage of the dainty dwelling, bosomed in its shrubs and trees.

He cursed it as he looked.

Vice lived like this, while innocence died daily in the streets!

As the velvet curtain fell behind her, Viva found herself within the chamber.

The fear died away in her; curiosity, wonder, eagerness, a thrill of triumph and a throe of delight at her own rebellion all conquered it, and were stronger than the instinctive and nameless dread within her a moment earlier.

Six or eight young men all rose and all turned their eyes on her, and all came to her with words of admiring greeting, which fell in a confused but delicious sense of homage on her ear. She shrank back with all a child's innocent shyness; she went forward with all a coquette's innate impulses.

She knew that she looked very lovely; she knew that this exquisite sorceress at her side was content to be eclipsed by herself; all the weakest and the worst things of her nature were appealed to and inflamed. The room whirled round her in a blaze of color; the heavy perfume on its air seemed to float round her in clouds of odor; the dazzle of the jewels and the precious metals on the banqueting table looked to her like the riches of an India—she drew a deep breath, and laughed a little soft quivering wondering laugh, that yet had half a sob in it.

This was the world at last then.

The world!—this paradise of brilliant hues, and priceless gems, and subtle perfumes, and honeyed words, and ardent adoring eyes! The world!—ah! how she marveled that there could be found lives holy enough to sigh for heaven if this elysium were to be found on earth!

She had never a clear memory of all that followed on her entrance into that enchanted room. All distinct remembrance was lost in a chaos of splendid images. For splendid this false glitter, this glory of meretricious color, this joyless joy, this hackneyed revelry, looked to the youthful eyes which only saw its surface. For Viva, reared amid the truth and the beauty of nature in innocent solitude, was too essentially a slave to the feminine soul within her to be poet enough to recoil from the falsehood of pleasure, poet enough to cling to the severity and simplicity of nature. The higher life escaped,—the lower allured her. It was the beaten-out gold of the jeweler's laboratory, which was still far more beautiful in her sight than the sun-fed lilies and lilacs of the spring.

She had a confused knowledge of being led to the first seat at the table under the dome of light, that seemed to her like the noontide sun. Of seeing some handsome courtly faces bent toward her with that delight in their regard which she already knew so well as the tribute to her charms. Of hearing such flattery that her brain grew dizzy with it, and she felt stupefied, like a bee overcloyed with honey. Of catching the vision of herself repeated on every side, in mirrors, till she saw that one best-loved image wherever her eyes turned. Of being moved to her gayest words and brightest laughter, till the audience ap-

plauded her idlest phrase as wit, and she felt herself a sovereign, whose words were precious as pearls and diamonds. Of tasting strange fruits, and wondrous confections, and wines that shone like so much sunbeam, till she seemed to float on air and to lose all sense of earth, and to dream that she was among the gods of the Greek fable.

She was drinking in poison—the poison of a hideous evil—with her lips, and ears, and eyes, and thoughts; but she did not know it; she was happy, she was victorious, she was exultant, and she was too innocent to be conscious that sin was encircling her on every side.

They were heedful not to affright her, but only to allure; they wreathed the death's head in summer flowers for her; they drew her to the abyss with sweet careless joyous music; they killed her with a poisoned rose. And she did not know; she was still a child, and still only happy.

As she reigned there proudly and joyously, the actress Coriolis looked at her once with a throb of remorse in her dead conscience; but she hunted it away as it arose.

"Pshaw!" she murmured. "What matter? A little earlier?—a little later? Things like her are made to slaughter and to plunder. She would end like me—it is better to begin so. She will thank me one day that she has wasted none of the years of her youth!"

As she thus thought, a door at the farther end of the chamber opened; through it, facing her and behind the child, came softly the graceful, slender shape of a handsome boy—a boy with dark eyes that gleamed with malice and triumph.

He stole gently across the room and up to Viva, and as gently his arm stole round her fair throat, and his lips brushed her curls.

"Viva!" he whispered, "I have thee at last—oh, my truant! And here are the deathless roses, the fairy pageants, the wines of the gods, that I promised thee!"

With a scream, as though a snake had touched her, she sprang to her feet.

The spell on her was broken; the netted dove soared from the snare.

"Let me go!" she cried aloud, as though by some in-

stinct the full sense of her peril flashed on her. "Let me go! Oh, how vile I have been to come here! It is *you!* —you whom he forbade me ever to see, ever to speak to, ever to think of again; you who gave me your toys, and deemed me some peasant girl you could kiss at your fancy! It is *you!* How could I tell it? How could I dream it? Let me go—let me go! I have sinned once against him; I will not disobey him again—never again, never, never!"

The childlike words rang out loudly through the chamber; she stood with her face flushed, scarlet with rage, and shame, and outraged pride; her eyes flashing with scorn on her boy-lover; her mouth trembling with grief for her own disobedience.

In an instant, by the voice of her young Faust, the full knowledge of her own error had burst on her, piercing through the mists of vanity, and delight, and wonder, and intoxicated triumph.

She stretched her hands out in a piteous appeal to Coriolis.

"Oh, take me back to him; take me back. You said you would; and I feel so frightened!"

Coriolis looked at her, and laughed.

The devil is never so brutal as when he comes into a woman's form.

The cold, cruel, mocking laugh stung all the child's proud spirit into life.

"Oh, I see now!" she cried out, in a mortal anguish that no man there heard unmoved. "I see now how true he was—how wicked you are! You laugh!—you laugh because you have made me disobey him. It is Satan who laughs just so when men disobey God. Oh how mad I was to hearken to you!—oh, take me back, take me back! Has not *one* of you all a heart to pity me? I never meant to grieve him! I only meant to grow great, and to pleasure him, and to be his glory. And I loved her so—that woman!"

Her voice died in a sob. It was a bitter suffering to her, the fall of her sovereign, the death of her ideal.

Her young lover smiled.

"Love her still!" he murmured. "What is her guilt? —to have brought you to *me*?"

He stooped as he spoke, and sought to draw her into his embrace,—the door was burst open, the curtain dashed aside, a strong hand fell on him and forced him from her, and tossed him like a broken bough across the chamber.

With a shriek of joy she threw herself into the arms of her savior.

The voice of Tricotrin rang like a trumpet-call through the silence.

"What!—had men need to dream of a Devil when the world held Woman!"

Holding her to him with both arms he faced the baffled and silence-stricken revelers; and a great awe fell upon them, such as fell on the dissolute patrician mob of Rome before the passion of Virginius.

"One cannot kill such things as you—the vilest things that breathe!" he cried, as his eyes blazed upon Coriolis. "You murder—body and soul!—and yet we must let ye go free because ye are women, because ye can crouch and shelter behind the shield of the sex that ye outrage! God! if I set my heel on your throat I should do no more guilt than if I strangled the life from an adder. Yet I must leave you free because you are 'woman'!—because you are the sole thing living on earth that can slaughter yet break no law; that can slay yet be left to smile on; that can make men curse the mothers that bore them, yet be safe in the safety of feebleness; the only thing living on earth that has the strength of the giant for crime, and the weakness of the coward for shelter. Had Israel no courtesans in her camps, that, in the parables of her Scriptures, she made the chief leader of hell a *male* creature?"

A dead stillness followed on the scathing fury of his words.

The banqueters drew aside, and gathered together, and left the woman alone.

Men feast with Coriolis, but none will fight for her.

They drain her wine-cups, for their own gold fills them; but no sword leaps from its scabbard for her sake.

In pleasure she has many followers; in need she is ever alone.

Then with hands that were, for that one time alone, ungentle to the child he loved, he tore from off her the

jewels, the flowers, the laces of her festal robes, and flung them all crushed and torn down at the feet of her temptress.

"Great God!" he cried aloud in the bitterness of his soul. "The tigress and the leopardess are tender beside Woman. Brutes though they be they do not drive the young of their own kind down into the nets and the knives of the slaughter! That work is spared for *her*—Man's helpmeet, God's best work!"

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT followed she never remembered.

When she recovered consciousness the cool autumn wind was blowing on her, and the starless rainy night skies were above her; she was lying on the turf that edged the highway, under a knot of roadside trees; beside her in the gloom stood the dim shadowy form of a man and of a horse.

The former leaned over her and touched her lips with his hand as she strove to speak.

"Say nothing; there is no need."

The old familiar sweetness of the voice struck through her heart; she raised herself and gazed into his eyes; then trembled and hid her face in her hands, and sobbed bitterly: she felt unutterably ashamed, though the shame on her was vague and without name.

She sank back upon the turf, and turned, and rested her forehead upon the wet short grass, moaning a little like a wounded fawn.

He said no word, and his eyes were dry, as he stood over her in that attitude of abasement and humiliation But he suffered a greater torture than had ever wrung his bright and happy life.

He had come, indeed, in time to save her from more than a child's broken ideal, a child's sorrowful disenchant-

ment; but nevertheless was she to him as utterly killed as though he stood beside her dead body. His rage had spent itself upon her temptress; he had none for her.

It had an exceeding pathos for him, this frailness that had been seduced by such fictitious greatness, this innocence and folly welded into one, which had been allured by such a painted, worthless, wooden shape, mistaking it for the goddess of loveliness and pleasure.

He saw it with the pitying tenderness with which a gentle shepherd would see his youngest lamb allured by poisonous and gorgeous blossoms, sweet to the taste, and splendid to the eye, on to the edge of a volcanic pit. Anger against her he could not feel; she was too young, too blind, too well-beloved. But the thing that he had cherished seemed forever dead to him; and a great blow smote him in the knowledge that the first hand stretched out to her with the world's golden bribes had been strong enough to lead her away without a thought of him.

He had said that if she forsook him for that wanton he would leave her alone to her choice; but when the test had come he had been governed by no impulse save that of saving her from peril and pollution. Yet the same feeling which had made him say that, were she faithless, he would never seek to coerce her to fidelity, moved him now, and made him hold her forever as utterly lost to him as though her will had had its way, and she had gone to the career which to her ignorance and her credulity looked so fair.

He was struck the deadliest blow that life could have dealt him.

In the same sense that the sailor of the Riviera had been robbed and deserted by the flight of the wife he adored, so was he by the abandonment of the creature that had been made his own by every tie of human gratitude.

He had reached that sublime self-sacrifice which speaks in the words—"If I love thee what is that to thee?" But he knew the bitterness which goes with those words, in the knowledge that the love which is given is counted as naught by the one on whom it is lavished; that it is of so little account that the life which it cherishes passes

heedlessly on, with no more thought of it than a laughing child on the first day of spring takes of the shy primrose and the purple bells of thyme, which his foot crushes as he runs.

"If I love thee what is that to thee?"—it is the supreme utterance of the passion which can withstand absence and neglect, and oblivion, and opprobrium, and scorn, and thoughtless cruelty, and still live on, strengthened by every year, and purified by every stroke. But none the less is it the supreme martyrdom of love.

And it was in this wise that his good deed returned to him; and the bread that he had flung upon the waters came back, and was as ashes in his teeth. For of all things that are true upon this earth this is most true,—that the recompense of our holier acts comes not in this world, and is not given by the hands of humanity.

"Rejoice, oh ye faithful servants," is not uttered under the sun; for Life is merciless, and in its many agonies and in its many evils there is not even the wild justice that belongs to vengeance; there is but the sound of a mocking voice through all the desolation, laughing ever at the travail and the cheated hopes of men.

Suddenly she lifted herself, and caught hold of him, and gazed up in his eyes again; she did not ask for pardon with her lips, but her gaze prayed for it with the mute touching prayer of a dog's.

He turned from her with an irresistible shudder; she was a child still; she did not know what she had done; she was conscious of her error, but not of its effect; she knew she had done wrong, but she did not know that she was, in his sight, lost to him forever.

The creature that had forsaken him must go from him; the love that paid its fealty only to coercion, was worse to him than hate.

"Hush!" he said gently, as she strove to speak. "You are not well enough for words. There is no need of them —I know all."

He knew all—without her shedding one ray of light upon the tale; knew all the weakness, the folly, the innocence, the willfulness, the vanity, that had lured her down a flower-sown path, on to the very brink of ruin; knew

all the insufficiency of the affection borne to himself, and given by himself, to hold her back from the sweet insidious seductions of riches and of flattery; knew that he had been deserted and betrayed with none the less cruel, the less merciless infidelity, because that infidelity was the fault of a child's selfishness, in lieu of a woman's passion.

Then, still with the same gentleness that had more terror for her than his heaviest anger could have borne, he lifted her into a covered cart that he had summoned, as it rolled slowly toward Paris with a night freight of autumn flowers, and leading the Norman colt by its halter, walked slowly toward the city by the side of the little wagon, in whose shelter Viva crouched, sobbing bitterly, with her rich silk robes covered by a leathern rug, and her face buried in her hands.

For the hour the bitterness of her chastisement equaled the cruelty and the weakness of her fault.

To the child—proudest among the proud—no punishment could have been so great as this intense humiliation, this passionate shame, that seemed to her scorching her very life up with its ignominy.

The way into Paris appeared one endless road of martyrdom; only two brief weeks before she had passed along this self-same highway, in the luster of the illuminated night, dreaming that the city would receive her as some royal creature, some daughter of Carlovingian or Capetian races, born to wear their diadem, and sway their scepter! And this was how she returned from her first flight toward greatness.

No discrowned queen ever went with heavier heart from her palace than she went now, back from the first-fruits of her own will, the first reward of her own ambition.

"Shall I *never* be other than I am?" she thought in desperation; the dread was stronger on her, even in that hour, than any other fear, stronger still than gratitude, or repentance, or love for her redeemer, though these were all startled to vivid existence in her.

He, himself, walked in silence, wearily and slowly through the dark and chilly night, the tired steps of the colt keeping pace for pace with his own.

Passion had spent its first outburst of mad fury; a dull hopeless anguish remained.

For she was dead to him as utterly as though he had slain her like Virginius, to save her from the arms of her spoilers.

The life that was faithless to him, could stay by his side no longer.

He spoke nothing as the wagon rolled tediously on its way; nothing as it paused before the door of Mère Rose, and he lifted her out from its shelter and led her within the house.

As the women rushed to her, with tearful cries of welcome and of joy, he motioned them away.

"She was lost. Let her be—she is tired."

The mingled love and fear in which they held him subdued their curiosity; they herded together in the passage hushed and afraid; and she,—with her head hung down, and her face hidden from them, crept up the wooden stairs in the dull oil light with slow sad steps, from which all the elastic buoyancy of her youth was banished.

Once within the little attic that served her as her bedchamber, she thrust the rusted iron bolt within its socket, put out the oil flame with a quick gesture, as though she dreaded still that there were some to look on her, and flinging herself down on her straw pallet, wept with heart-broken self-pity; half like a child from whom his favorite playthings have been taken, half like a woman from whose passions an ever-abiding shame has sprung.

"If I could only be great!" she prayed;—and fell asleep with that prayer on her lips.

Without—through the heavy rains that were falling through the dark and weary streets—he went slowly, leading the colt homeward.

He had received his recompense.

CHAPTER XXII.

At midnight, and till midnight was long past, he waited in the great court-yard of a great building.

The rains beat fiercely on him, but he did not heed them.

It was almost dawn when the lights of a carriage flashed red through the mists; he sprang forward between it and the gateway.

Its occupant alighted, and was stopped by him.

"One word with you?" he asked.

The Duke de Lirà started, turned, and paused.

"Now!—yes, if you desire it."

They went within, out of the wet black night, into a great lighted frescoed chamber, like the chambers of the palaces of Rome.

His hair, his garments, his beard were dripping with rain; he was splashed and jaded, and pale with exhaustion and pain; he observed no ceremony, and heeded no form; he stood facing the man he had sought, and spoke without preface or address.

"You were in earnest to-day?"

"I was."

"Then I come to take you at your word. You were right—I was wrong."

The noblest words that can be uttered by human lips cost him a great pang in their utterance.

The other looked quickly at him, and said nothing.

"I was wrong," he pursued, rapidly. "I mistook selfishness for justice, and was led astray by my own desires. I threw aside a great good for another, because I considered and studied myself. I was rough in anger with you, and ungrateful for the benefit that you offered. You stung my pride and my heart, and I was blind—blind to duty and justice. Stay! hear me out—it was so. To-night I have had my punishment."

He paused abruptly. He breathed loud and fast; but his eyes never left their straight and keen regard into his companion's, and his words were spoken unflinchingly.

"You said rightly. No duty can hold a female thing, no tenderness can content her, when once the passion of her vanity has been fired. Look you,—that child is innocent as any lamb in the meadows, any dove in the woods, and yet the leaven of her womanhood is in her, and will urge her on to destruction. I thought, in my folly, that not to sin, not to suffer, not to know the meaning of evil, not to want any more than a bird wants in spring, just to live the free harmless life of a country-born creature, would suffice to make a child's joy, and a woman's content. I erred; many men have erred like me. There is a devil thrice as strong as we are—the devil of Discontent. There is the tempter that lures away from us our wives, and our mistresses, and our daughters,—there is the huckster that buys a soul with a string of seed-pearls, and chaffers away honor for a knot of sapphire stones."

His listener grew paler as he heard.

"What has chanced to the child?" he asked, hurriedly. She had touched his heart more deeply than he knew.

"This has chanced to her,—that the word of a strange woman had more sway with her than mine; that the eyes of men have found out that she has loveliness; that the snares of the city have been spread for her, and have caught her, and have maimed her. Two hours since I brought her out from the house of Coriolis."

"Coriolis!—the actress!"

"Coriolis—the courtesan. Why be choicer in names than she is in her sins? She lured the child thither by specious words and gracious promises. In the eyes of Viva she was an empress—an angel! Coriolis caught her fancy as the light takes a moth's. She led her where she chose, for she promised to give her greatness! She decoyed her there toward evening. I had left her alone. When I returned she was lost: she had been absent some hours. I knew at once where she was sure to have wandered. I forced my entrance into the villa—into the chamber where they sat at their banquet. They had throned the child there as a queen, and a terror of her

reign had just commenced to touch her. I was in time to save her. What I said, what I did, I have forgotten."

The broken, abrupt sentences escaped him harshly and in haste; the recital was terrible to him. Honor and honesty demanded it from him; but none the less was it bitter exceedingly.

"Stay! Hear me out," he said, quickly, as his listener interrupted him. "Let me end what I have to say. I rescued her from that accursed place ere she had learned more than a vague fear and a wakening horror of the world into which she was flung. But what use is it to rescue the goat from the pit, if it return again and again to eat the poison-flowers that grow on its sides? And that is what Viva will do. She is innocent—yes; but how long can innocence grow side by side with vanity and ambition? The eyes of libertines have beheld her; the brutality that christens itself love has fastened on her; the powers that lie in wealth are arrayed against her—she is not safe one moment longer. If her own heart were content, indeed, all these could with ease be defied. But against the foe in her own soul I can bring no army. I may restrain her from sin,—she is brave, and proud, and pure of thought—vice once unmasked to her would be loathsome. But I cannot keep her in peace; and—and—I dare not keep her in misery! Now, I have told you this. It was your due to know it. It may well be that you will withdraw the offer you made her two evenings ago. You will be justified in so doing. She does not know the evil she has wrought herself; but I know it, and I know that a woman-child that has been once beneath the roof of Coriolis may well be marked as dishonored forever."

"Hush, hush! Would you deem me so brutal, so harsh?—for a young girl's unthinking rashness, a playful creature's foolish fault?"

"It would be no harshness; it would be justice. A woman's fair repute is like a blue harebell—a touch can wither it. What she did to-day—in rashness, in folly, as you say—may rise up in future years, and bring her bitter chastisement. Yet—it makes no difference with you, this thing that I have told?"

"None. I desire to serve her as greatly as I ever did."

"That is very nobly said. Then I accept your offer. I do not dare to thrust it aside."

He stopped abruptly; his voice was hoarse, and died away in a whisper. The other made no answer; he divined the suffering that accompanied this adhesion to his will.

"Let her come," he said, softly, at length. "For a brief space, at least. At its close—who can tell? Early impressions have great force, and what we are nurtured in we commonly prefer; her absence may show her how strong her love for you is, and how needful to her is the life of which her ignorance now wearies."

"There is no likelihood of that. She is a hawk that once cast down the wind will never come back to the wrist of her keeper."

"Why so? She loves you?"

"Ay, as children love. Where is the child whom some costlier bauble than what you can give will not lure away from your hold soon or late? No—if she come to you once, she goes from me forever. But—there is no need to speak of myself."

"There is great need. Look what an immeasurable debt she owes to you."

"I do not count it. Neither need she nor any one. I desire her to be happy, that is all. There is another matter which concerns her. The youth of whom I spoke to you, that young lordling, was one of the accursed crew to-night. Doubtless it was his gold that bribed Coriolis to the setting of her snare. He has had his punishment; he will not stir his bruised frame for months. When he does arise, shame will tie his tongue, and I can drive him from the country, for a season, by a power I have over him—the power of the knowledge of his own vices. But if you have aught to do with Viva, it is needful that you should be aware of him—he is the son of Estmere. He has broken faith with me; he is traitor as well as tempter; but I care not to wring his father's great heart with the tale of his shame; cowardice and falsehood never before touched his race."

"You spare the child's tempter! You are generous indeed!"

"I spare Estmere—not him."

"Lord Estmere! What is he to you?"

"He is a man who is honored; he is a man who has suffered. They are titles sufficient to forbearance. Beside a girl's innocent name, a girl's stainless youth, they are things that will no more bear men's handling than will a snowflake as it falls! Is there any other thing to be said? Tell your mother what I have told to you; Viva enters no home under the shelter of falsehood. But—do you know that the world will call you a madman?"

"Wherefore?"

"For believing the word, and recieving the Waif and Stray, of—a bohemian!"

"The world can do so. I have attended to it as little in my fashion as you in yours. I know that I have the truth from your lips; I have been, also, at the pains to verify the facts that you have related to me; and I believe that I see my way to rendering another life happy. As for my being deemed a madman,—it is ever the better things in us that the world calls our insanities."

Tricotrin gave no reply; his eyes dwelt on those of the speaker with a long searching, penetrative regard, that seemed to seek to pierce the secret thoughts of his innermost mind. Then, with an abrupt movement, he turned away.

"You have a noble nature, and you do a noble act," he said, briefly. "But—I cannot thank you till, in the years to come, I see how it is with her."

Then, without farewell or obeisance, he quitted the chamber swiftly. He was even as the shepherd who had left the ewe lamb that he had saved through storm and drought, and warmed in his bosom, and fed with his hand, at the threshold of the rich man's palace

The Duke de Lirà started as the door closed, and leant in perplexed meditation against the bronze reading-stand, on which the great volumes that he usually studied lay.

He was a man of pure intent, of gentle heart, of noble nature, untouched by pride, untainted by evil desire. He [illegible] desired to benefit this beautiful young thing.

whose bright youth fascinated him. He was wholly unconscious that any selfish impulse prompted the determinate effort with which he had vanquished his mother's disinclination to take a foundling beneath her roof. He was incapable of cruelty, incapable of a base egotism; he believed himself only actuated by a genuine compassion; he had in no way awakened to any perception of the attraction that Viva's personal loveliness possessed for him; he had been entirely honest in all that he had said.

Yet, as he leaned there, a certain sense that he, with every sincere and good intent, had still done that which was cruel and unjustified, stole on him. He had considered only her welfare; he had been callous to the pain that her loss might cause to the only one who hitherto had set any value on her undefended and unclaimed life. He had thought only of gratifying the wistful desires that shone in her radiant eyes; he had forgotten that her translation to new spheres might leave a void, never to be filled again, in the heart that had grown to hold her as its treasure.

He had known Tricotrin to be a careless, fearless, high-couraged, laughter-loving wanderer, imprisoned by no ties, bound by no creeds, chained to no home. It had never seemed possible to him that such an one could love as tenderly as he loathed bondage passionately, or that his affections could strike deep root, though his temper flung off all fetters. It was only now, now when to perceive this was useless, that any glimpse of its truth flashed upon him.

"I hoped to do good," he thought wearily. "What if it end in evil?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

VIVA slept all the noon of the next day.

When she awoke, rest and slumber had healed all the harm that the night's terror and fatigue had wrought on her: to the health and the strength of her youth illness was impossible. But the wound to her pride and her conscience had struck more deeply; it was with a dull, heavy sense of pain and of shame that she arose and dressed herself, and went to her accustomed seat in the attic casement. For the first time fear—the sure shadow of all evil doing—possessed her: for the first time, she felt afraid of meeting the eyes of the friend whom she had wronged.

Moreover, there was the old leaven still working in her, despite all her loathing of her temptress, despite her instinctive consciousness of having escaped some terrible danger. The old desire and discontent still murmured in her soul as she gazed at her white linen dress, and thought of those pearls and sapphires she had worn, as she looked round the wooden walls of her attic, and thought of the soft scarlet hues and silver glisten of the actress's banqueting-chamber.

"Ah! why does wickedness have all the beauty and all the pleasure?" she wondered with an aching heart, perplexed by the question that mocks divines, and scoffs at philosophers, and baffles at every turn the efforts of moralists and teachers.

Virtue gives her children so often but stones when they ask of her for the bread of life: wickedness casts the golden apples by thousands to her followers. And false is the preacher, who, denying this, bribes to the allegiance of the first by promise of her crowns, and seeks to affright from the palaces of the last by oaths that her festivals and banquets are Barmecide feasts held above an oubliette of death.

The poignant grief of the past night had somewhat softened with the waking day; had somewhat changed into the flattered sense that her very error, her very deception, her very peril, were befitting the romance that belonged to such an enchanted princess as herself. Although the natural conscience and impulse of the child had made her recoil from her disobedience, and repel, in an instinct of loathing, the overtures of her young lover, now that she was safe and was alone, a certain sweetness lay for her in the remembrance of such an episode, a certain delight existed in the sense that she had been deemed worth the weaving of such a web to entrap her.

The dominant thing in her was pride, and her pride had been up in arms against her tempters: but the next strongest thing in her was vanity, and vanity found a charm in the remembrance that she had passed through such a proof of her power.

At night she had wept with joy to be given back to the safe, familiar, innocent life of her childood: but with the morning she grew well-nigh ungrateful for safety, and thought in all the restlessness of nascent ambition: "Shall I always stay thus, like a wood-dove in a wicker-work cage, when the world holds so many palace gardens whence such paradise-birds as I can spread their golden plumes in the sun?"

She had escaped from Coriolis; but she had not escaped from the poison that Coriolis had breathed over her.

It was well, she knew, to be safe in her haven; but it was tedious, it was monotonous, it had no picturesque color in it: and she began to sigh again, though ashamed of her sighs, for those glittering pleasures that she had just tasted, as a humming-bird just tastes the honey in a flower which a cruel wind shatters down into a heap of bruised petals.

The poison had touched her lips; though she had shuddered at its baneful sweetness, yet the thirst for more of its lusciousness had been left awakened and unappeased. She thought, with a sort of despair, of her future: it was the first time that ever she had dreaded this unknown thing, which, *ever ere now*, had been enfolded in the gold-

spangled mask-dress of so mysterious and royal a newcomer; for the first time she now remembered that under its gay domino there might be seen, perchance, a skeleton,—a death's-head. She had no accurate knowledge of what it was that she felt: but she had a vague nameless terror of herself, as though she were conscious that if innocence must be leashed with obscurity, the wild desire for greatness that lay in her would hurl her, sooner or later, into the dominion and the power of evil.

The full noon light was slanting through the lattice when the step which she knew and loved the best came up the wooden stair. She cowered down and buried her face in her hands: she felt heart sick with humiliation, and all the love she bore him smote her with its remorse.

One thing alone had he ever forbidden to her; and that one thing she had seized in all the willfulness of rebellion!

She never looked up as he crossed the chamber; she trembled as she felt that he drew near; she heard him pause beside her, and she shrank farther and farther back —in silence.

He stood near, silent also.

Then by a swift impulse, she caught his hands and gazed up in his face.

"Forgive me! Oh do forgive me!" she cried, while her voice was choked with tears. "I was so wicked! and yet I meant no harm; she said you should know, and that you would learn to see you wronged her, and that I was a burden to you when I might grow great and be your glory! I never knew that young prince would be there—I never did indeed! Believe me—oh pray, believe me!"

"I believe you. If I had thought that you could lie, I would have left you to live and die in that hell you had chosen."

The words were stern and chill, and perfectly calm: she shuddered under them, yet she took courage to look up in his beloved familiar face. And she saw that his eyes were fixed on her with a look that smote her to the heart; the look that tearless eyes will give to some treasured thing that lies cold in death. She gave a cry *as of irrepressible* pain, and flung herself at his feet, all

the force and fervor of her variable nature roused in self-accusation and self-hate.

"Blame me—beat me—kill me! but do not look at me like that! I was wrong—oh, I know it so well! I was vain, and foolish, and mad, and wicked, but throw me out on to the stones of the streets. Do not look at me again like that!"

A great pity changed and softened his gaze as he heard; he stooped and raised her gently.

"I was harsh—forgive me. I forgot how weak and young a thing you are. Hush!—do not sob so bitterly. You were tempted, and you had not strength to resist. Well, it is oftentimes so with all. You are not alone my little one."

There was an intense compassion, a passionless sadness in the words, which awed her as no words of upbraiding could have done.

"But I am vile!" she murmured. "So vile to have ever disbelieved you, and disobeyed you! Let me tell you all, and then——"

He stopped her.

"No. I know all I need to know. Spare me the tale of how much dearer than I, were the world and that wanton to you."

He turned from her, unable to hide the anguish that this one disloyalty had wrought him: the child hung her head and said nothing. She blushed for the thoughts which a moment before had haunted her; she was disloyal to him still, the world still dethroned him.

He paced to and fro the chamber awhile, conquering the fierce longing which possessed him to seize for his own, let it cost what it would, this fair faithless life that already seemed so wholly his own. When he came again to her it was with that tranquillity in his look and in his voice, which he had striven, so many hours through, to attain ere he had come into her presence.

"We will never speak again of this," he said gently. "You disobeyed me, indeed, but you were sorely tempted; you were wooed through your weakest follies; and you were moved by a noble thought even in the midst of your selfishness. I forgive it. I do not say for-

give yourself: for you were very wrong, and I would fain have the remembrance of your error wound you sharply awhile, so that the cicatrix it leaves be a warning to you forever. But we will never speak again of your action, or of your tempters. As you grow into womanhood you will see, as you cannot see now, the full extent of their wickedness and of your peril. I have other things to say to you. Listen."

Viva, stilled and vaguely half affrighted, half consoled, raised her tear-laden eyes to his, and held her breath, and waited with an indefinite prescience that the time was near at hand when he and she would be no more as they so long had been in this joyous and unshadowed life, which to her impatient ignorance had grown so wearisome.

"Listen," he went on, speaking still with that calmness which he had taught himself to wear before her. "Your act last night has taught me what I had feared before; that I have not the means nor the power to make you happy any longer. No! hear me out. It is not ingratitude in you; it is your woman's nature. You pine and pant for things that are not in my hands to bestow on you. A female soul that chafes, and longs, and harbors discontent is ever on the balance toward evil: for sin has already its surest forerunner and ally fastened upon the life that is at war with itself. Therefore, since I cannot provide the gratification of your desire, others must do so."

He paused, and his breath came with a short, sharp sigh: she listened, moved with keen repentance, yet also moved to a vague and eager expectancy.

"I should have told you yesterday," he continued, with an effort, "that your fairy was no fairy, as you may be sure; but what is quite as potent in this world, a rich and nobly born person. She is the mother of that gentleman whom you have seen here some few times; the Duchess [illegible]. She is very aged, but very powerful, very enormously wealthy: and she is filled with excellent intent [illegible]. She invites you to pass a brief season with her, [illegible]est. Yesterday I refused; perhaps selfishly, but [illegible] that it was best for you not to enter and enjoy [illegible]f life that I cannot continue to you. Now, I

know that some change must be made for you, and I have accepted this offer: because otherwise much evil will come unto you."

"Oh no, oh no!" she murmured. "I will be good, I will be content, I will try, indeed I will try, never to long for anything save what I have."

"That will be vain," he said bitterly. "The dog that is only held by her chain will be faithless the first instant that she tears her neck from her collar! No, I do not mean to be cruel to you, my child. I mean only, that though you should honestly intend to be contented, and strive to be so, the content which requires to be striven after, is a hollow thing which embitters and deceives alike the one who seeks for it and the one who lives near it. The moment that love or content need an effort to keep, both are valueless; both are dead bodies from which the spirit has flown. I have been your guardian, I will not be your jailer."

He stopped once more; the child said nothing; she could not have promised him honestly a content that should have been spontaneous and shadowless.

After awhile he spoke again.

"The change that your temptress offered you, was to woo you from health and peace to the plague and the horror of a lazar ward; but the change that this great lady holds out to you may be, as in all likelihood it will be, splendid. At any rate it is a chance: a chance for you that I dare not put away untried, since the past night showed me how easily to be led into peril you are, and how hard to be weaned from evil. At your years, Coriolis was no worse than you are now, a young thing, an innocent thing, a thing gay and careless, and full of play on a sunny seashore; but vain and restless, and full of vague ambition and seething discontent, and impatience at her lot and at her home. Lest the time should ever come when looking on you I should curse you—as every mouth that is pure with truth curses hers that is one lie incarnate—I know that you must go from me, I know that you must pass out of my life and out of my love, now, and it may be forever."

His voice sank very low, and grew unsteady over the

last words; but there was in his accent that which struck her with an intense fear, and moved her with a strange dim horror of the thing she might become—as though in some glass of sorcery she beheld the fair face of her beaming youth, gray, and shrunken, and sightless, and ghastly with the corruption of death, with the ashes of age.

She seemed to behold, as in some vision, the power of evil that lay slumbering in her: the weakness that would grow to guilt, the dream that would fructify in sin, the ambition that reaching up to heaven would recoil and fall to hell; the nascent passions hushed under the calm of youth, like painted snakes asleep beneath the leaves of roses, that would arise and coil, and sting, and slaughter, and die at last of their own poison. She shuddered where she stood, and her lips grew pale, and she stretched her arms out to him with a blind piteous gesture.

"She said that such things as I were always born for evil; it seemed her glory, and she bade me make it mine; ah! why did you not set your foot on me and crush me when you found me among the grasses? It had been better so."

He quivered as though she had pierced him with a knife; the reproach that he had so long foreseen and feared rebuked him; he had his reward at last.

But his thoughts chiefly, even in that moment, were for her. He took her hands, and looked down on her with pitiful gentleness.

"My child, I knew the time would come when you would utter that plaint against me. You are a woman, and born of a woman! But you are, for all that, of a brave spirit; and your reproach to me is the reproach of a coward. It rests with you to live your life nobly or vilely. We have not our choice to be rich or be poor, to be happy or unhappy, to be in health or in sickness; but we have our choice to be worthy or worthless. No antagonist can kill our soul in us; that can perish only from its own suicide. Ever remember that. Indeed, to creatures like you, the way to evil is perilously easy; but none can force you down its incline unless your own vanities and passions first impel you. You have re-

proached me, for the first time, with having saved you to run your course of life; it is that you may not have to utter that reproach in far more deadly earnestness in years to come, that I shall send you from me now. Frail flowers such as you need fence, and shade, and culture, and training toward the sun. You cannot soar upward and grow straightly in storm, and cold, and drought. I was to blame that I forgot this. But I shall never again forget it. I was unwise enough to dream that I might graft on you some of my philosophy;—I forgot that you were not of my sex! The life that has been so good to me would not suffice to you. I should have known it earlier——"

"Yet my life has been so happy!" she cried, in involuntary self-reproach.

"Ah—so you will remember and realize, years hence, with vain regret, but it is no longer happy to you now. The desire for the unknown has come on you. Let us speak of it no more; I have fair news for you. This great lady seems willing to befriend you; go to her for a short season. It will be something fresh at least."

"But what will grand'mère think?"

"She has not lived through eighty-three years to expect gratitude in the young, or memory in the absent. You were angered with me yesterday that I told you no more of your 'fairy.' I ought to have done so. It might have saved you from one harsh experience. But—I was selfish. I waited on my own wish, and I forgot your welfare."

And to the breadth and the depth of the man's generous nature it seemed, indeed, that he had been guilty of an ungenerous and of an illiberal thing in counting, before the benefit of this foundling whom he had harbored, the wish and the peace of his own future. It seemed to him that to lay a claim to this existence which he had saved *because* it had been thus saved by him, was a meanness and a cowardice that deserved its chastisement.

"I rejected the offer for you," he pursued, with effort. "I did wrong; I see that now. I can only hope my error can be repaired. Last night I sought out the Duke de Lirà, *I told him this;* I told him also what you had

done. Nay—do not shrink at that. You might shrink indeed if I let you go under his roof with a lie in your mouth. I told him—all. Of your passion for the stage; of your idolatry of this dazzling sinner; of the scene in which I found you; of the allurements that had tempted you. He knows everything. But your folly does not change his desire to befriend you. I have seen him again this morning. You can go—at once—to the existence he offers you."

Viva drew a deep breath.

"They are great people?" she asked wistfully.

"They are of great rank,—do you mean that? There are great lives spent in garrets, in mines, in beds of agony, in galley slaves' benches. But 'great' in your sense means only affluent and arrogant!"

A feverish bitterness in his tone, altogether foreign to him, arrested her attention.

"You do not wish me to go?" she asked, with the same wistfulness. "Tell me, you know I will never disobey you again?"

"Disobey! Am I your taskmaster?" he said fiercely, the fierceness that pain arouses in man as in every other animal. "If you loved me, would you talk of obedience? In love, two wills move together, inspired by one soul, as the two wings of a bird move, ever apart yet ever in union. But—that love is not between *us*. Your wings are your own; let them bear you where you will. What pleases you pleases me. Be free as air to follow your fancies. It may be for your good that this thing opens to you; it is not for me to close the door——"

"But what do you *wish*? It is that which I want to know!"

"What you wish is the question here. You wish for riches, rank, luxuries, prominence, all sorts of vanities and indulgences: well—you will see them nearer at least by this visit. That is something. It may be that they will lose their enchantment; and then——"

The sentence broke off abruptly; he could not put into words the hope which rose in him that, closely seen, these things which looked to him so idle and so artificial might *lose their* glittering bewitchment for her; and that in

their hot-pressed atmosphere her young free heart might spring back at a rebound to the liberty, and the freshness, and the sincerity, of the life in which she had been reared.

"And then what?" asked Viva, anxiously.

"No matter! They may only gain surer sorcery over you; I forgot that you were feminine, my Waif! At any rate, your new friend means well; she can be of use to you, as poor old grand'mère never can; she shows great kindness in the mere interest she takes in you, because you are—what you are. You have grown impatient of the life you lead,—yes, and will grow more so, despite all your promises, which I know, for all that, were sincere. In the household of Madame de Lirà you can see a little for yourself what the greatness you covet is like. You can measure for yourself the differences between the existence you lead through me, and this existence in wealth and in pomp which you imagine can have no cares. The opportunity offers: it is but right you should take it. Come—there is nothing to wait for; I will leave you there, and in eight days I will return for you."

Viva stood irresolute; something in his words, colder and more brief than they had ever been to her, though still so gentle, moved her with a certain fear, that dashed a chillness over the prospect before her.

"But if I am not happy there?" she murmured, with a sudden terror.

In an instant she saw the smile she knew so well beam in its brightness, and its tenderness, over the face above her.

"Well!—you will know your refuge! Come to me in your sorrows, if you forget me in your joys!"

For the first time some conception of the depth and magnitude of this priceless love which succored her in all things, and claimed nothing at her hands in recompense, stole on her senses with a vague emotion of her own absolute unworthiness of its sublimity. She could not measure its height, more than the unaccustomed sight can gauge the height of mountains; but in some way it moved and awed her as the majesty of the everlasting *hills will do those who gaze* upward to them.

She looked at him one moment, then threw herself into his arms with all her childhood's abandonment.

"Ah! How selfish you must think me! If you had only let me die when you first found me, what burden and what trouble you had been spared!"

"Chut!" he said softly, though there was an infinite sadness in his eyes as they looked down on her. "Where two love, one of them is always selfish. And—as for the other thing—not till you regret your life, my Waif, shall I ever regret it for you. If you stain it, or learn to feel it wearisome to bear, then indeed, but then only, shall I lament the hour in which I saved it."

"But I have been only a care, a cost, a trouble to you? I have done nothing to repay you?"

"Pooh! little one!" he said lightly, for in that moment he felt too keenly to dare trust himself to earnest words. "Floating a Waif is a more innocent indulgence than most of our masculine extravagancies; and as for payment—when I hear you laugh that is quittance enough. And you have laughed often, I think, in your fifteen years of existence."

"Ah, yes!" sighed Viva; and for the moment that old life by the river side, that she had grown so impatient to get rid of for the "great world," looked wonderfully fair to her—transfigured as the golden light of distance alone can transfigure either the landscapes or the years we leave behind us.

"That is right," he said, briefly. "Whatever the future brings you, it will be well to have had that laughter. And now, make yourself ready; since this thing is to be done, do it quickly."

He moved to the window as he spoke; he was impatient of all bitter moments; his philosophies and his instincts alike rebelled against pain as the great foe of animal life and of mental peace; he was intolerant of depression, and resisted all calamity that strove to weigh him down, as he would have resisted a physical disease.

Opposite him, in the little casement under the gable, sat the grisette; her work had fallen in her lap; her tearful eyes were gazing vacantly out into the street.

Much the same pang ached in both their hearts; the

woman brooded fondly over hers, the man thrust his passionately away. To her there was a lingering sweetness in it that she clung to; to him there was an intolerable weakness in it that he strove with all his force to uproot.

They both knew that they who go to the Rome of their desires never return to those whom they have loved and left in the old deserted land.

Viva was quickly ready, and at his side; she was in eager, tremulous excitement. She was glad that her desires had been granted thus; and yet she was fearful, after her past night's deception, of what vipers might lie curled in the purple passion-flowers of the world's pride and pleasure.

Tricotrin said little on their way, a way that led through country fields and the fragrance of the Ville d'Avrée woods, out toward where a summer villa stood, sheltered under reddening foliage that joined the forests of Versailles.

He lifted her from the covered wagon in which they had driven, and walked with her some little distance down a broad tree-shadowed lane. It was now almost dark. At the end of the road were the gates of her destination. In this sunny autumn weather the Duchess de Lirà preferred this light and pleasant place to either her great palaces in the Faubourg, or her château under the shadow of the eastern Pyrenees. Outside the gates he paused a moment; there was no one in sight save an old man sitting under one of the sycamores resting with a load of wood. He laid his hand on Viva's shoulder, and looked down into her eyes.

"My child, you have your heart's desire; you go among 'great people.' It may make your happiness; it may make your misery. Granted wishes are sometimes self-sown curses. Whichever it be, remember—go where you will, do what you may, you can always come back to me!"

The infinite tenderness of the words raised something akin to terror in her; her color went and came in rapid changes.

"But it is only for a little time!" she said, rapidly. "It is no separation? I shall be with you again so soon?"

He smiled: the smile that smote her heart with remorse, though why she could not tell.

"A week is an age sometimes at your years. I hardly think you will remain or return to me—the same. But that we must chance, grand'mère and I. Anyhow, love that has not been put to the test is no love; and the young bird that has never been allowed to fly, likes its cage from habit, not choice. Go within. I have rung; they will come to you. In eight days you shall see me again."

Before she could reply or resist he had closed the gate gently on her, leaving her standing within the enchanted ground of her new paradise, and had gone back, alone, through the checkered twilight shadow of the road. The echo of his steps upon the gravel, growing fainter and fainter as he passed away, filled her with a sudden sense of loneliness and of ingratitude.

"Oh, come back, come back!" she cried. "I do not want any one but you;—I do not wish to stay."

But the words did not pierce the metal gates that were now closed between them; and a servant, waiting for her, approached her with so courteous a deference, that she forced back her tears, and began to dream again that this was the commencement of that living fairy-tale, in which she, from the obscure chrysalis of a Waif and Stray, would change into the winged and glorious butterfly of an omnipotent Princess.

Through a wilderness of floral beauty, through gorgeous autumn flowers, blooming and blazing around snowy statues and sparkling fountain-spray, through aisles of scented bushes and of orange-trees powdered with their yellowing balls, she was led into the house. For the third time she was in an abode made luxurious and elegant by wealth; for the third time, the glow and shadow and subdued brilliancy of gold and silver, paintings and statuary, velvets and marbles, were about her as she moved; for the third time, the fragrance, the grace, *the stillness*, the indescribable beauties of good taste, and

of choice art, filled the chambers through which she went And they had lost none of the unutterable delight which at the château of Villiers and the house of Coriolis they had possessed for her. She drew a deep breath as she saw and felt their sorcery; she already forgot the echo of the steps, at whose retreating sound her tears had started but a few moments earlier.

She saw no one in any of the rooms and galleries she traversed. Her conductress, a creole woman, took her in silence through them, and only spoke when, at length, she threw one door open.

"Mademoiselle will wish to rest; this is Mademoiselle's chamber," she said, with one hand lifting up the silk curtains before the entrance.

Viva gave a cry of delight—the same childlike, eager, rapturous cry, as when in the wine country she had found a purple butterfly, or heard a new legend from grand'-mère.

The small octagon chamber glistened with azure and white; a silver-winged angel hovered over the little sequestered bed; flowers in profusion filled each nook and corner; a little fragrant fountain played in a jasper basin; between the mirrors was a single picture, a Proserpine wandering among lilies and asphodels; beyond, through the open window, lay the gardens, and avenues, and orangeries.

Viva stood in a trance of enchantment, flushed, mute, beatified.

The curtain fell behind her; she was left alone. Her first impulse was to turn to the mirror; her next to gaze around the chamber that was "hers."

The little wooden chamber under the ivy-covered eaves in her old home had been kept for her at the cost of many a personal sacrifice, and the trifles that adorned it of quaint carving, or of oil sketches, had been the gifts of most tender pity or most generous love. This room, so fair to her sight, was but one among many similar in the house of a great personage, and all its beauties had been prepared, not for her, but for any other visitant who might be guest there.

Yet *how mean and poor* looked that little room of

grand'mère's! how exquisite and luxurious a nest was this!

"The fairies have remembered me at last!" she cried aloud, with her hands clasped above her head in breathless ecstasy.

And she—had forgotten one who never had forgotten her through all the years wherein the fairies had been silent to her call.

CHAPTER XXIV.

When he went thither again at the end of the eight days, the servants brought him a little note. It was very short, and like a child's.

"My best Friend,—I am so happy; I never dreamed that any life could be one-half so beautiful. They take me to-day to see a great review of soldiers. I fear that I shall miss you. If I do, will you leave word whether I may stay here three months? The duchess has asked me, and I hope very much you will say—yes. Your own

"Viva.

"My love to grand'mère and Mistigri. The duke is so good to me; and has bought me such magnificent things."

He read it, crushed it in his hand, and asked them for a pencil. Then on its little, torn envelope he wrote the one word of assent required.

"Give that to—Mademoiselle," he said simply, as he left it in the servant's hand, and went out from the gates.

Mistigri trembled as she looked up in his face that was white as with the whiteness of death.

The months went by, and Tricotrin might have been numbered among the dead for any sign that came to her from him. Where he went no one knew. The fishers of the western coast could have told, and they only.

The weather was wild and fierce; storms dashed the shores and beat the boats to pieces; the nights were filled with hurricanes, and the beach was strewn with drift-wood and the flotsom and jetsom of barks broken on the rocks. All through that bitter time of the early winter he was with them. It was no new thing; and they were well used to see him in the driving gales,—with the winds tossing his hair, and the rains beating on his bare chest and shoulders, and the breakers leaping on him as on a granite block,—bring in some fishing-boat, whose load would be the sole support of some drowned sailor's widow, or launch some life-raft through the surge to reach the stricken vessel that, reeling and dismasted, plowed the blackened sea.

Few winters passed but brought him, in the time of peril, to the Biscay-beaten coasts. He loved sea and storm like some Norse viking of the old wild years; the rising of the sullen winds was to him as the trumpet-note to the war-horse; the exultant courage in him delighted in the contest with the waves; and he loved the brave, rough, patient, melancholy, great-souled people who lived beside the everlasting waters, and gained something of the grandeur and the poetry of those waters in the midst of so much rugged poverty, so hard a conflict for the bread of life. For many years he had appeared among them at such seasons; and in the superstition engendered by the mingled tragedy and simplicity of their existence, they looked upon him as on one of more than mortal strength and power, at whose bidding the seas released their prey, and delivered up their dead.

That he made music at their feasts, that he flung their nets over his shoulder, that he stacked sea-weed for their aged and infirm, that he mended their sails singing as he sat on the sands some of their old-world romances, that he laughed with their handsome fisher-maidens pushing a boat through the surf,—all these things had not made them the less deem him half a god, though his vigorous limbs were clothed in their garb, and he had been more than once dashed, bruised and senseless, on their rocks in vain effort to succor some sinking vessel.

These months in the late autumn he had passed among

them, in the salt, hard, fresh seafaring life. If pain were on him he never let it brood on undisturbed; if regret or desire haunted him he exorcised them by some means or other; his whole temperament rebelled against the weight of care or sorrow, and sought light as instinctively as do the sunflowers.

Yet, against all his efforts and all the happy philosophies that had kept youth so bright and ardent in him through years that bring the burdens of age to many men, against his will and his endeavor he could not turn his thoughts from Viva. He could not tear out from him the jealous, carking care that filled him when he thought of her in strangers' hands, the hot, senseless hope, which lived in him against all reason, that she would cling to him still in preference to the things of pomp and power. He grew to hate his love for her—but never to hate her. He knew that it had lost the purity and the peace which had sanctified it for so long; he knew that it was the love of a man for the fair eyes, and the smiling mouth, and the white limbs of the woman's beauty that tempts him. That love he had known oftentimes; but it had never been a gay, wind-tossed, chance-sown flower in his path; not a long-cherished blossom like this, with thorns hid in the heart of its sweet white leaves to wound the breast upon which it was clasped in caresses.

He hated the passion that had sprung up in him from out of the kindly and pitying care he had given her: it seemed to him to poison all the tenderness he had felt for her in the time when his hand had played with her hair, or his lips had touched her cheek in the unthinking and negligent fondness that he might have felt for a favorite dog. It was on the impulse of that hate for his own instinct of jealous possession that he had embraced the offer of a new life for her, dreading lest his love made him blind to what was best for her, dreading lest it warped him to injustice and to egotism.

He, careless and heedless in so much, watched with keenest scruple his own nature, lest, under the angelic guise of tenderness for her, there should be the hellish snake of envious desire. He had served her; all she had, and all she was, she owed to him; at his will he could

have cast her out to the starvation of an unowned beggar-girl: for this cause he held himself debarred by all common law of honor from any shape of tyrannous usurpation over that which lay thus wholly at his mercy. The titles that other men might have thought gave him the rights to do with her as he would, were in his sight the strongest forbiddance from all such rights' despotic exercise.

Once he had saved a bird whose wing was broken; it had been in his earliest boyhood, and he had grown to love fervently the creature he had succored, whose shattered pinion he had bound, and whose food and water and sod of grass had been his daily care for months through a keen snow-laden winter. With the spring, just as its song grew music on his ear, and the brightness of its pretty eyes rewarded him, the little lark fluttered its feathers in impatient longing, and beat its beak against the cage that had so long been its sanctuary from the winds and the hail that had struck so many birds down, frozen, on the ice-bound earth.

He, a mere child, had wept grievously as he saw that feverish fretting of the lark which wished to leave him; some others standing by laughed to see his tears: "Silly lad!" they cried, "can the bird escape you? Bend its cage-wires closer; so shall you always have it with you."

But the boy had shaken his head.

"I have done it good, shall I do it evil? It must be free to stay or to go, else what is its love worth?"

And he had opened the door of the cage, and turned it toward the west where the sun was setting: then he waited and watched.

The lark saw the glow of the sun, and moved, and lighted awhile on the edge of its prison-house; then with one glorious burst of song soared upward, higher and higher, toward the golden radiance of the skies.

He looked after it as it flew, with the great tears blinding his eyes; but he smiled as he heard the hymn of its joy.

"It is happy," he said gently, as he hung the cage on the bough of an oak. "And—when the winter comes back perhaps it will be glad to come too."

But the bird never returned, though the empty cage stood open all the seasons through.

The same impulse as had moved him then, moved him now. As he had given his lark its liberty, so he gave her freedom to his foundling. What was fidelity worth only born of coercion? The song of the lark had been sweet to him; but its melody would have been jarred forever had it come from the throat of a captive. The love of the child had been sweet to him; but its caress would have been embittered to him forever had it come from lips on whose breath there had hovered a sigh.

Let her go!—the child like the lark.

If the summer of other lands seemed fairer to her sight she must be free to take flight to them; if the old fostering care seemed dearer than the glow of foreign suns, then only would the love be willingly given, and not prison-born. Any way, the door was opened; and though the ingrate should wing swift way to vapor-palaces of sunlit cloud, still would the deserted refuge wait, unclosed; in case that storm, and snow, and driving blasts should ever bring the wanderer home, with drooping wing and breaking heart.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE thirtieth day of the last month came. He passed once more up the linden-lined road. The bounteousness of color that had so late made the earth beautiful with fruit and flower had shriveled, dropped, and perished. Wild winds were tossing the russet leaves, and the great woods were bare and brown. There was winter in the air; and all the spikes of grass were white with frost. In so brief a space all the brilliancy and wealth of autumn had died away as though it had never been. Was the brief time long enough likewise to kill the young warmth of a girl's heart as it had killed the color of the earth?

He traversed the grounds unobserved; it was a wild and gloomy day, and no one was at work in the gardens. The house itself was long and low, with broad windows that nearly touched the ground, and had a terrace running beneath them. The rooms within, at all times visible, were doubly clearly seen from the bright light of wood fires inside them that glowed through their lozenge-shaped panes.

Instinctively before one he paused.

In the full illumination of ruddy color that was reflected back from the mirror-lined walls of the room, and glowed upon the rose hue of its velvet hangings, he saw her; and his heart beat thick with longing and with fear, with hope and with despair.

She stood upon the hearth, in the full warmth of the fire-flames, and was laughing, with her head thrown back, as she tossed to and fro in the air a pretty golden toy, a Protean Arlecchino jeweled and enameled, that went through changeful antics, as he was tossed or poised. Her face was radiant with laughter at the puppet's evolutions; dainty robes clothed her tall slender limbs, and trailed behind her on the floor; gold buckles glittered on her pretty feet; and her hair, turned backward in the Louis Quatorze fashion, was fastened by an arrow of gold half hidden in its rippling clusters; wealth and rank had set their seals on her; she looked no more a child, but a beautiful woman.

What need had he to enter? His question was answered by his first glance at her face.

Had the lark come back from its flight through the sunlight ether? Would the girl come back from her ascent into the luxury of riches?

His heart stood still, his hope died out, as he beheld her. With all that radiance on her face, where was the shade of one regret? With all that mirth upon her lips, where was the sigh of one remembrance? He had lost her forever. And he knew his loss as well as though he had seen her laid down in her grave.

Slowly, and with one long backward look, he turned and moved away toward the dark cold shelter of the woods; and she, unconscious all the while—laughed on,

tossing her Arlecchino upward in the fire-glow till his jewels sparkled and his silvered bells rang again.

It was two hours later when Tricotrin returned, and the dark day was waning.

He desired, then, to see the Duke de Lirà. He was admitted at once, and conducted to where the nobleman spent most of his hours when in his mother's villa; a small, lofty, book-lined room, dusky even at midday, yet rich in bronze, and statuary, and antique things that gleamed curiously from out the twilight.

Tricotrin went quickly forward, and spoke ere his host could speak.

"I have kept my word: keep you yours. Let me see Viva. No! do not speak. Have patience with me. I desire to see her first and hear you later. I address the request to you since she is beneath your roof, but my right to her is not wholly gone; by it I come to claim her."

The Duke de Lirà looked at him in silence; his face was pale, his blouse was wet with night dews, his eyes were full of speechless woe, like the dumb woe of a dog. There was that in him which made his hearer obey the abrupt and fiery discourtesy of the command.

"I will send her to you here," he said as briefly as he rose, and passed out through the door of his chamber, and closed it behind him. Some moments drifted by, whether many or few he who waited could not have told; then the door reopened, and, with a light swift bound, the gay grace of her form came toward him, all luster and light in the gloom, with the shining Arlecchino still in her hand. It was with a cry of welcome and delight that she sprang to him; and it thrilled through him as the song of the lark had thrilled through his heart as a child.

He caught her with unconscious passion in his arms, and kissed her with kisses that burned her cheek like fire; then as suddenly he loosened her from his embrace and put her from him. He remembered that he had no right to force on her caresses, for which in a brief while she might blush with shame, no right to steal their virginity from lips that another might soon seek with a lover's or a husband's title.

She, all innocent of his thoughts, laughed up in his eyes: her hair had been ruffled by his touch, and her delicate dress stained by the night dews on his own; and the toy she held bruised and bent by the violence of his embrace.

"Oh the poor Arlecchino!" she cried, "how you have hurt him! And he cost a thousand francs in the Palais Royal yesterday."

With an inexpressible impulse he dashed the puppet from her hold on to the ground.

"That is how you greet me!"

She, who had never heard that bitter, burning passion in his voice before, stood silent, trembling, afraid, amazed, gazing at him with her bright large eyes. She did not know what she had done.

"I did not mean anything," she murmured, "it is only —the Arlecchino amused me so, and he is broken."

The words recalled him to himself, and roused him from the delirium of wounded love that had found its violence an issue in the toy's destruction. He stooped for the puppet, and raised it; his rival of tinsel and clockwork that was before him in the thoughts of the creature who owed him her salvation! His voice trembled, but was very gentle as he answered her.

"Forgive me, Viva: I erred greatly. I had no right to bruise your plaything, above all as I have not a thousand francs to give for any toy! But I have skill at these things, and I will mend his injuries; and—for my violence give me your pardon."

The words found their instant way to the still fond heart of the child.

"Oh, what do I care for the toy?" she cried. "The duke will buy me another. I was only afraid I had angered you; and—I am so glad to see you once more!"

He answered her nothing, but stooped his head over the Arlecchino. The welcome was little worth, it was the welcome of a playful unconcerned affection; and, already she looked to a rich man for the solace of her woes, the provision of her pleasures!

Viva looked at him earnestly, in some perplexity; she was afraid that she had pained him, but also she was

irritated that he should have acted so strangely. Three months had been sufficient space for her to have learned to look upon herself as a thing of beauty and of witchery to whom all should bow and give way.

There was a long silence between them; a silence that she spent, almost instinctively in noting the stains of the grasses and the rains upon his linen, and thinking how much nobler he would look if he wore velvet, like the men whom she had seen of late. The feminine mind played with frivolities and caprices while the masculine soul suffered a mute martyrdom.

At last he looked up, laying the puppet down.

"The toy will be none the worse; I will remedy what is amiss. And now, have you forgotten, Viva, that this day is the last of those which you were asked to pass here?"

She started; and a flash of remembrance and of terror came over all her face.

"I had forgotten it," she murmured.

"And—you regret it?"

She looked down; and he saw her mouth quiver. She said nothing.

"You have been happy here then?" he asked.

"Oh!—happy?—yes!" she murmured, the flood-gates of her enthusiastic speech opened at last. "Happy? Why! it is like enchantment! You do not know how beautiful the life is! They have been so good to me. They have given me a little horse, snow-white, and a hundred pretty things like Arlecchino, and many dresses, all as beautiful as this, and some more so; and then every nook and corner of the house is like a picture; and one has never even to pour out a glass of water for one's self; and my own room is so exquisite, and the duke is always giving me some new surprise or pleasure; you do not know what it is! And then one feels so great too—like a princess—among it all!"

"And who loves you—whom do you love in it?"

The question was passionate in its scornful demand, its vehement reminder of the one thing lacking.

"Love?" she echoed. "Oh, no one! But then—it is so magnificent; it does not matter about that."

"You have learnt the world's lesson swiftly!" he muttered, as he swung from her.

The heartless creed couched in the guileless words struck him with an intolerable suffering. What avail to have given her care and tenderness for all these years!—a month of luxury outweighed them all!

"I am very different to what I was!" Viva retorted, with a certain petulance and offended pride, as instinctively she glanced at herself in one of the mirrors. Although it was twilight she could see the gleam of her gold arrow in her hair, and the trailing grace of her azure skirts.

"You could not speak a sadder truth!"

The words were hoarse in his throat with the acuteness of disappointed mortification. Unconsciously he had hoped, far more than he knew, that the ties of old association and of gratitude might have been strong enough to withstand the temptations that sought to break them asunder. Unknown to himself the idea that the gilded restrictions of a lofty station would gall her, much as they would have galled him, had misled him; and, relying on the free-born temper of the child, he had forgotten the ambitious vanities that ran with it.

"A sad truth!" echoed Viva, with all her graceful petulance in arms against the attack upon her vanity, while her eyes sought the beloved reflection of herself in the mirror. "A very happy one, surely! You might as well say that it is sad that the exquisite little old duchess here, who is just like one of her own porcelain figures, does not resemble grand'mère clicking over the snow in her wooden shoes, or peeling onions to put in the soup-pot!"

"For shame, Viva!" he cried, vehemently. "Have you less gratitude than the stray lambs feel for the hands that fed them when they were motherless? Your duchess! I know little of her; but I know that if all her life through she have had the truth, and courage, and charity, and chastity of the brave old woman you despise, it will be well for her when her last hour comes. What think you the noble old soul, who wearies for a sight of your face as

she sits by her lonely hearth, would feel if she had heard your words now?"

The rebuke was passionately uttered; it touched her to remembrance, contrition, and all the affection still strong in her beneath the selfishness that stifled it. She sprang to him with all the charming impulsive grace of her childhood.

"She would call me wicked and worthless, as I am. My tongue should have been cut out before it should have breathed a word against her. Dear, old grand'mère! I care for her so much, I do indeed. It is only everything here is so different: it makes me forget, I think; it turns my head dizzy like wine!"

"The wine of flattered vanity—yes! Heads wiser and older than yours grow drunk on it," he said, with a quick, impatient sigh as he turned slightly from her.

"You think me cruel and foolish then?" she murmured, with a touch of piteousness; her reverence and love for him were stronger than anything else as yet in her, and were making her odious in her own sight if she were unworthy in his.

He looked down on her with a smile, whose sadness and whose tenderness she could not measure, for they were beyond her knowledge.

"A little cruel—youth always is in its own intense self-absorption; and—as for foolishness, we cannot look for you to be very wise: but you follow the world's wisdom in choosing the things of the world. But—how will it be with you, Viva, if you be obliged to come back to the only life I can give you?"

He saw her turn pale, and she gave a swift, upward glance of alarm.

"I will try and be content," she said, softly; and her promise was sincere.

But scarcely any answer could have stung him more. He knew what content that has to be striven for is worth; I felt all the bitterness of such niggard return for the vishness of his own donations. He repressed the words at rose to his lips. She had been so utterly and entirely s debtor that he would not bring against her the charge her ingratitude, lest it should seem like a citation of his n benefits.

"You mean," he said, calmly, at length, though the calmness was very hard to attain, "that you could not be simply and sincerely happy in your own life, having once tasted the luxury and brilliancies of this? You mean, that if you have to return to grand'mère and her cottage you will rebel with ceaseless regret against them both?"

Viva hung her head, and her eyes went instinctively to the gleam of her golden arrow in the mirror.

"No, no," she said, with the tears trembling in her voice. "It is not that—I love you so dearly, and grand'mère too—but it is only——"

"Only what?"

"That I think I am born for this life! I always seemed, somehow, to *want* it so much, even when I did not know what it was like! The duchess herself, who is so terribly proud, says that she is sure I come from some great race or another. And it may be, you see,—why should it not be, when all this that is great seems to come to me by nature? You remember, that English lord with the beautiful face said just the same thing when he passed me?"

Tricotrin made no answer.

He stood in the shadow, where she could not tell what changes swept over his features. It cost him a long effort ere he could reply to her as he desired to do—without trace of the conflict that raged in him. It was a strange caprice of accident by which, in the very words with which she endeavored to exculpate herself, she thrust deeper into his soul the iron wherewith she so all unconsciously stabbed him.

"You may be right," he said, at length. "Though beware how you lean on the thought of some lofty origin; it will be but a broken reed at best. I see, however, plainly one thing,—that whether you come of prince or peasant, you will never again be happy in obscurity You would sooner go away to Coriolis than back to grand'mère!"

Viva colored hotly.

"Only to Coriolis' fame: it has greatness in a way at least."

"Greatness! Good God! how irresistibly what is vile looks fair in the eyes of woman! Pshaw! What avail to rear you fickle exquisite things in innocency and solitude; you find your way to sin and its pomps as instinctively as mice steal out to honey!"

The violence of the words escaped him ere he knew it, in the insupportable anguish that it was to him to find her thus wedded to vain things, and turned from all that he had thought would grow but dearer to her by their absence.

She—ignorant of his meaning, but comprehending only that he deemed her inconstant and unworthy—stood with the tears in her eyes, half of sorrow, half of offense. She knew that she had been heartless and wrong, but also she felt herself aggrieved.

She could not tell that the feeling which moved him was the consciousness that she, unless lifted from temptation and encircled by the safeguards of a sure and lofty position, was precisely of the nature that would be swiftest drawn down to gilded evil, that would be easiest lured to drink of the perfumed wines which poison as they intoxicate. The very ignorance and purity of her mind would lay her open and unguarded to the seductions which would come to her with every appeal to her vanity and her tastes, and with all the darker traits veiled from her and unguessed. He saw that, had the desire of his heart been given him, and the creature of his love been his, there could have waited for him in the future no other fate than the fate of Bruno.

She did not know this.

The lovely, careless, graceful thing, thinking of her golden arrow in her hair, and the azure glisten of her dress, never even dreamed of the sharp despairing torture of the man. And he took heed, even in his torture, that she should not. Why vex the thoughtless heart of a child by letting her behold a wound which she could neither measure nor comprehend?

Not to pain her was his first thought; and he crushed the thorns into his own breast unseen, rather than let them touch the hand which she might have stretched out in pity, had she known that they were wounding him.

There was a long silence between them; when he spoke it was gently and gravely.

"I seem harsh to you, my child. I am not so, God knows. You have the foibles of your sex in a strong degree; but we should scarce expect you to be free from them,—with such a face as yours, and barely sixteen summers over your bright head! You are enamored of your life here, doubtless, though to my thinking the life you have led was far simpler, and freer, and happier. But there is one thing you seem to have forgot, Viva; your sojourn here was but for a visit. Though you have been given so many gifts, you are but a stranger?"

She was silent. He saw once more the quiver of disappointment on her mouth. She had never thought of this—to her belief it had been the fairies who had brought her to her rightful heritage.

"You have forgotten that?" he pursued. "You have forgotten then, also, that to-day you were to go back with me to your own old home; since no guest can outstay the limits of her invitation?"

Viva lifted her head, with an impetuous passion in the gesture.

"Oh, wait, wait!—hear me! It is not because I am ungrateful, not because I do not love you and grand'mère with all my soul; but, indeed, I must be something great somehow. If it be only charity here, I will not stay. I know I was born an aristocrat like themselves. I will not remain for their alms, however splendid they be. But do let me go on the stage. I need not be wicked, as that cruel Coriolis is. I will obey all you wish; I will do all you say; but there I could conquer the world,—or what is the use of the beauty you all tell me I have? It is not because I am heartless, not because I do not feel all that you and grand'mère have done for me; but I *know* that if I go back to be shut up, all the long winter through, in our little room by the river, I shall die just with longing for some other world, like the Mexican bird that the sailor son of Sarazin brought his mother from over the seas!"

The whole pent-up passion of the girl's heart broke out in the vehement words. Under the terror that she would

have to return to the monotony and peasant companionship of her home, the flood-gates of her impetuous desire were unloosed; and there poured out before him the turbulent stream of her long-repressed thoughts.

Of what the stage was in reality she had even yet little notion; it was only in her sight a means whereby women of beauty and genius soared their way from obscurity and poverty into the light of the world's adulation. Every sentence she uttered pierced him to the heart with the sharpness of steel; but she knew naught of that. She knew only that he loved her. Why, then, should he deny her this one yearning of her nature—to be great?

He let her speak on, answering her nothing. To answer her must have been to either condemn or affright her; and he dreaded lest she should see the tempest that raged in his heart of grief, and despair, and desire.

This was all that he had reared her for—to hear her speak of the river-nest that had sheltered her as of some prison-house, and beseech his permission to follow the steps of the vilest women of Paris!

But of what he suffered there was no trace in his voice when, at length, he replied to her,

"I have told you—I would rather see you in your grave than on the stage. But that may be a prejudice. You are right, an actress may be as noble and pure a woman as any other of her sex, but,—if she be, she is hissed off the boards! I see well that your heart is set on some far different life than any I can give you. I will think awhile on all you have said, and see you again. Meantime, go; and if you can, bid your host come to me."

She paused before him, wistfully.

"You are angered against me?"

He stooped to her, and there was an emotion in his voice that she had never heard before, as he answered her.

"Child—if with years you grow the guiltiest woman that ever shamed her sex, *I* shall have pardon for you. Can you not even dream what love is?"

She looked at him half fearfully, her great eyes wide-opened like a startled stag's. Of such a tenderness as this she had no conception; yet it stirred her to a vague

terror and an intense sense of worthlessness and weakness beneath the divine greatness of such a gift.

With a sudden wild awakening to its strength and her own blindness, she stretched her hands out to him with a broken cry.

"Ah! Who will ever care for me like that again?"

For this one instant the supreme value of this priceless benediction outweighed with her all lower and baser things. She saw, in that one moment, that never, so long as her life should last, would such a love as this be hers again.

A delirious hope flashed on him. He caught her hands against his breast, and held them there with convulsive force.

"Would that love suffice to you, Viva? If you wandered with me always—were never severed from me—would you sigh then for the golden gifts of the rich, or the triumphs of Coriolis?"

His eyes fastened on her face with feverish longing, with thirsty dread and desire mingled, to read his answer there. She hesitated a moment, looking up at him with innocent wonder, knowing no meaning in his question save that she should go whithersoever he went in his wanderings, as, when a child, she had so often begged to do.

"I do not know," she said, tenderly, and with a tremor in the answer, for she loved him in return very fondly, though with a love, to him, well-nigh more cruel than her hate would have been. "I am always so happy when I am with you; only—only—it is to be great, too, that I want!"

He dropped her hands, and turned away. The hope of a moment's span was gone.

"Send your host to me," he said, briefly.

She went as he bade her slowly, musingly, with a certain terror and vague sense of loss and of remorse upon her. She forgot the errand on which he had sent her; but went almost mechanically to her own room, and curled herself among its velvet cushions, and buried her face among its hot-house flowers, and cried as if her heart would break—why she could scarce have told.

She had said the truth sincerely, yet she felt that she had been heartless and ungrateful; she felt too, though indefinitely, that in the answer she had given, she had in some way or another divorced her life from that of the one she loved best. Best, although it was the thoughtless and half-cruel child's love that she rendered him; best, although the riches and glamour of the world were before him in her sight.

In her solitude she thought more sadly and more gravely of him. To go with him in his wanderings as she had used to pray to do,—she wondered how it would be with her if she did so? She remembered many happy hours spent with him in careless freedom; among the yellow wheat or the ripened vines; drifting down the river in some great cumbrous boat, that was yet so darkly picturesque, with its heavy tawny sails and loads of corn or fruit; or sitting under the broad-leaved chestnut-trees before some farm-house door, listening while the delicate delicious music of the Straduarius echoed through the evening air, and made the very watch-dog lift his head to listen. She remembered so many of those joyous seasons—life made up of them would surely be fair to the sight and the senses?

And then with him she knew her better nature reigned as it never did in his absence: she was purer, simpler, braver, nobler, beneath his influence than under any other. She knew as well as he that in this life that she now led she had deteriorated. She knew that for sake of every better and higher thing in her she should cast off all these desires for a fate he could not give her, and surrender herself in innocence and contentment to the safety and simplicity of her old life beneath his will. He had been to her in the stead of country, parentage, home, and brethren: he, he alone, as far as her memory could reach, had bestowed on her everything she had received, from the very bread that had appeased her daily hunger. And all the reward that she had given him had been to pine for an alien greatness, and to refuse to follow him through the years to come! She was hateful in her own sight; hateful and full of guilt. Her heart went out to him in

childlike contrition and longing tenderness; but her pride and the lusts of her vanity drew her from him.

To wander with him always—what would it be but to be always among the people? True, they loved and honored him, and his step brought gladness and mirth at his coming, as the foot of the wine-god sowed thyme and flowers wherever it fell.

But it was ever among the homes of the poor that he dwelt, in their fields that he labored, in their festivities that he shared. He laughed to scorn the palaces of the rich, and would never break bread beneath a great man's roof. The dome under which he worshiped was the blue of the starlit sky; and the ears for which his melodies were breathed were the ears that through long labor had only heard the moving of scythes, or the beating of oars, or the whirling of steam-wheels, and had been deadened and deaf to the sweet sermons of music. To be with him was to be "of the people" forever; forever to be banished from the triumphs of greatness, from the luxuries of wealth.

And though the graciousness of love, and courage, and poetry, and charity, and tolerance, and peace, would be with her in the life, she still recoiled from it because it would be without the dreamy splendors and sensualities of riches, and without brilliancy in the sight of men to whom she would still be but a Waif and Stray.

"I *must* be great!" she murmured, vehemently. "I am sure I came from greatness!"

She could not doubt it, as she raised her head and looked at her face in the mirror opposite; there were patrician pride and patrician blood in every line and hue of it, flushed though its hot cheeks were, and tear-laden its brimming eyes.

She felt herself the offspring of some mighty race, and destined to some mighty sovereignty: should she be false to these? No!—rather must she be false where every common bond of gratitude claimed fealty.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TRICOTRIN remained long where she had left him, his arms resting on a marble shelf beside him, and his head bent down on them.

The torture of doubt was ended; there remained in its stead the dullness of despair.

The bird chose to spread its wings toward the glistening golden roofs of kings' palaces;—let her go! If she came not of her own will to find her repose and safety in his bosom, not by lure nor by prayer would he recall her.

Nevertheless, the corpse of a dead hope lay heavy on him, and its coldness chilled to ice the strong and vivid blood within him.

Yet not now, even in his own heart, did he reproach her. It had been his own folly, he deemed, to think that the free, wandering, homeless life of a man who was poor could suffice to the fancy and needs of a fair woman-child. Yet not once did he wish he were rich or were great,—the love that would not cling to him because he could not strew its path with roses, and fill its hands with gold, was love worse than indifference in his eyes. Indifference might have been cold, but love such as this was cowardly.

An hour passed, unwittingly to him; then the door once more unclosed and his host entered. Tricotrin started and raised himself erect; in the dusky ruddy light of the declining day the agitation on his face was veiled.

"I only this moment learned that Viva had left you," said the Duke de Lirà. "It seems she forgot your bidding until now. You find her——"

He paused; hesitating how to put the question that was on his lips.

Tricotrin filled up the blank.

"Changed?—or well? Which would you ask? I find her—as I thought to find her—ruined for the life with which she had been hitherto content, and ready to hurl herself to any depths from which it should be promised her she would rise enriched and great! You have done what I foresaw would be done: I do not blame you. You have only brought out, under hot-house heat, the native evil that always sleeps in such fair frail things as she. You have thought to do well by her, doubtless; but how is it well to make a creature, half infant and half woman, loathe all that is honestly hers, and crave all that can never be hers except with dishonor?—how is it well, to make the pure bread of life taste coarse and abhorrent to her, and only the honeyed gilded confections that poison and cloy become the sole food she will feed on with appetite?"

He spoke with the swift eloquence that was always natural to him under emotion; what arrests the speech on most men's lips brought it, burning and rapid as fire, to his. His hearer listened without anger, though it was a bohemian who rebuked him for what the world would have called a generous and most marvelous charity.

"You do us some wrong, I think," he said, patiently. "Here, the tastes that were inherent in her have developed; that is all. Is it not better they should do so, while yet her future is undecided and malleable, than that they should be discovered by herself and by others too late?"

"Too late!" echoed Tricotrin, with unconscious violence. "It is always too late for a child to discover that she is made for riches, and rank, and honor, when she is motherless, fatherless, nameless, and penniless! What avail is it ever for such an one to discover that she pines for a palace, and has the graces that empresses have not? What avail ever, except to lure her outward to the road where vice dresses itself as splendor, and disgrace thrones itself as a sovereign, and the woman who counts the most honors is the woman who counts the most sins! I see no end that is served, except such an end as this, by her learning that she passionately craves what is not hers by birth or by title, and can never be hers by purchase *unless she barter her beauty* for it!"

"You forget our covenant," interrupted the Duke de Lirà, still gently, for he interpreted aright the despair and the dread which inspired words in themselves so pregnant of offense for him, had he so chosen to read them. "You cannot think us such barbarians that we can forsake this lovely child when once she has been under our roof? I gave you my word to provide in such measure as I could for her happiness. It is I who am her debtor for having brought so much of youth, of gladness, and of freshness into my own somber existence."

Tricotrin flashed a searching burning glance upon him: he said nothing, but in that glance he read the other's heart like a book,—his suspicions were confirmed.

"My mother has grown to attach herself to Viva," the nobleman pursued. "She would part from her with regret; of the girl's own contentment you can judge for yourself. This life suits her well—let her lead it."

"How?"—his teeth were set hard as he put the question.

"As she does now. I have no—absolutely no—kindred. I can do as it pleases me with my wealth without wronging any. I will guarantee to her such a fortune as shall raise her above all possible neglect or need. For a year or more she can spend her time in such studies as are pleasures to her; then when she is some few years older she shall enter the "great world" that she longs for, in such fashion as shall show to her only its brightest side. I know that for her to do this is for you to surrender all the claims on her which you justly hold as her sole friend and protector; but it is for her own happiness, which, I think, can ill be made in any other way. If I wound you by what I say you must remember that in saying it I only keep my word."

"I thank you; you are very generous."

That was all he answered as he turned and paced to and fro the length of the chamber. He knew that the words addressed to him were spoken in honor and liberality; the acknowledgment of them was wrung from his justice; yet he could have leapt on the man that uttered them and have strangled him, as wild beasts do their foes.

"You will prefer the assurance of her future from a

woman than from a man," pursued the other; his sympathies were too true to let him misconstrue as offense to himself the pain that he knew his words caused. "My mother will say to you all that I say; in her name, not in mine, if you deem it better, can the conveyance of such wealth as we may decide on be made over to Viva. She has attached herself to the child: it will lend a charm to her last years to see so graceful a creature about her in all the brilliance of youth. What more can I add? Any pledge, any security, any bond you may wish I will give, and that life will go well with her I cannot doubt. She is not one of those formed to suffer; under calamity, or poverty, or shame, she might kill herself like enough, but exist in pain or want she would never."

"That is true,"—he paced still to and fro the chamber, his head sunk down on his chest. He knew that it was true; that this child whom he had rescued from the dreariness of death by hunger, thirst, and the chills of the night, was of that temperament to which existence must be sweet, rich, uncheckered, or else,—is cast off by rash passion in the first hour of desolation.

He knew that with himself happiness could not come to her, since in her sight that magic gift could only be summoned by a wand of gold. She desired these things which now were offered to her: though the effort were to kill him he would not seek to hold her through her gratitude, nor permit pity to approach him from those whom she selected in his stead. His pride arose to repress the evidence of pain before the man to whom her allegiance would henceforth be given, by choice and preference.

He came and stood before her host, grave, calm, with a haughty and patient composure, beneath which all passion and all pain were alike held down in silence.

"You make a great offer; a generous offer," he said briefly. "From you, moreover, it is dictated by no design of a libertine, no desire of a voluptuary. I comprehend your intention, and I honor its charity. Its acceptation or its refusal lies with her whom it concerns, not with me. It were idle to affect to doubt which it will receive. Were she my daughter I should refuse, in her

name, a liberality which, however nobly tendered, must still be an alms. But, having no sort of title to her life, I can have no justification in forcing her away from your charity, which can bestow on her the magnificence she covets, to retain her under mine, which can scarcely at its best lift her above poverty. Let your mother state to her to-night what you have stated to me; let her, then, weighing well the two, choose betwixt you and me. A thing of so much moment should not be hastily adopted or rejected. I foresee many objections to your plan: many reasons why much trouble may come to you through it; we do not know whence she comes, nor who may some day claim her. But this is for your judgment; not for mine."

The Duke de Lirà answered nothing. He stood, looking earnestly and with a curious wonder on the man who thus addressed him with all the tone of one gentleman to another, though speaking of poverty and clad in the guise of a laborer. With a sudden impulse he spoke aloud the perplexity that had baffled him from the hour when he had first seen the revolutionist, with the hymn of the Marseillaise in his lips, and the red flag above his head, drive back the plunderers from out his court of honor.

"Tricotrin! *what are you?* Forgive me the insolence, if insolent it be, for sake of the friendship I would bear you if you let me. A bohemian, a genius, a scholar, a democrat, a wanderer, a man who might be everything, and who chooses to be nothing. What can one make of you?"

Tricotrin's fine delicate lips laughed slightly.

"Sir—the people do not share your perplexity. I would make myself intelligible to your Order, if I cared for their comprehension. I am no mystery that I know of; save that truly a man who does not care for greed or for gain is an anomaly in this day! But I do not care to speak of myself. I thank you for your offer of friendship; but I make no friendships. And from your order to mine they would savor too much of patronage for my taste. Let us rather conclude the matter which alone unites us, —for a season. You desire absolutely to adopt Viva into your family and your station?"

"I do so."

"You remember that contingencies may arise that I cannot avert? No one knows whence she came, nor by whom she was born or begotten; there is the possibility at any time of claimants arising; specially so when she is of prominence in the world."

"That we must hazard. I think that there is little. I have had fresh inquiries instituted whence you discovered her; but there appears no clew whatever to her parentage or her abandonment. And the crime of such abandonment will keep silent its perpetrators. Moreover,—who has seen her in that little chalet by the Loire? A few peasants only. There are indeed Coriolis and her young lover, but we can guard her from their sight until such time as, with her womanhood, she shall have so changed that they would never dream of her identity. Unless you choose to reveal it, none need recognize her in the new life she will lead."

"I shall not do so. At the same time let it be understood that I cannot guard you or her from such possibilities. And I deem them more perilous than you do. Women like Coriolis never forget aught—save their God. Nor on the other hand will I surrender my right to have free access to her whenever I may deem fit. Account for my connection with her as you please: but I will not be debarred from some watch over her life."

"Heaven forbid you should be. If she ever forget what she owe to you——"

"She will forget it. It is not remembrance of that kind that I need. But I desire to have, always, the power to judge for myself of how far from, or how near to, happiness she be. You may trust me to exercise the power in such wise as will be best for her. As regards wealth,—it would not be just, that taking her to a glittering life, she should be abandoned to the chances of caprice; or left to poverty if your mother die. Therefore, let the Duchess de Lirà settle on her such sum as she shall deem just, if Viva decide—and there can be no question but she will so decide—on acceptance of your offer. Let her ponder well, understand fully, what it is she does. As she selects, then so be *her future*. If I do not thank you

as you may deem you deserve, believe that I do not the less appreciate the gentleness and benevolence which move you. I leave you to acquaint her yourself of your will with her. You can then propose to her all that you desire, and see if she accept your guardianship: there can be no doubt that she will do so."

As he turned to move away, his host stretched out his hand to arrest him.

"Stay! Tricotrin, if it give you pain, if it cause you regret, to part with her to our keeping, I do but ill repay the debt I owe to you?"

"You owe me none. I forced my people from plunder and incendiarism: think you I should have done otherwise if they had attacked the house of my enemy?"

"No matter, I do not hold what you did so lightly. Well as they loved you they were nigh turning on you for thwarting them, like tigers balked of their spoil. And if to lose the child you have cherished cause you one pang of regret——"

Tricotrin stopped the phrase on his lips with a smile that had an irony more mournful than tears.

"Pshaw! Is there aught that we love that does not stab us, somewise, soon or late? There is no serpent without, that can sting half so hard as the tenderness in us!"

Then, his pride forbidding him even so much as these words of reproach and lament, he laughed as he passed to the door.

"I am a wanderer, and have no ties to be ruptured. You solve a problem that began to grow knotted and vexatious in my hands. I should thank you more than I have done. Without you Viva would most likely have passed to the path of Coriolis. Her rescue is my obligation. Adieu!"

He was gone as the farewell was spoken: in his hand was the injured Arlecchino. Even a trifle that pleasured her had worth in his eyes; and a promise concerning a toy had its bond on him, even though the toy were his rival.

As he passed an open door, a soft, silvery, luminous thing sprang through it toward him; it was the form of Viva, in the airy grace of her evening appareling.

"You are not going?" she whispered. "Madame receives to-night, and they have dressed me early—I want you to look at me!"

His breath came and went, swift and hard. While his heart was breaking over her, this frivolous thing only heeded the sweep of laces and the shimmer of silks!

"You were fairer in your vine garland," he said briefly.

She gave a sigh of impatience.

"Oh! how can you say so? Just look at me, I am all snow and silver, like a fairy."

And she shook herself, and whirled round lightly, that the gossamer tissues might gleam in the light and float on the air. A strange dreamy memory of the German Willis of legend, who dances in the midsummer moonlight, and with whom whosoever dance also must perish ere dawn, came to him in the moment, as such weird fancies will come to minds of the strongest.

"Nature has given you beauty. Take heed how you use it," he said wearily. "But you are too young for these pleasures, Viva."

"Oh! They only let me go for one hour, just to see and be seen," she murmured, with the tears still wet on her flushed cheeks. "And it is so beautiful there! and the great ladies caress me, though I think that they hate me in their hearts! and the great nobles tell me they never saw anything half so lovely as I am. And I think it is true when I look in the mirrors: there is no one like me!"

The confession was so naive; the vanity, as yet so innocent; even in that hour he could not choose but smile at them, though the smile was very mournful.

"From the world they prepare you for, and the world of Coriolis there is little difference, save a glazing of lip honor! But—what can they call you in this house to their guests?"

"Only Viva: there is mystery kept up about me. It is thought that I am the grandchild of a dead friend of madame's, whom she has discovered in an obscure position. Nothing definite is told. Madame likes to have it all shadowy and vague, and to excite people's interest without conceding anything to their curiosity."

"So! You take kindly already to the lies of the great world?"

Viva colored: the dauntless haughty nature of the child was instinctively and inherently truthful, and he had trained her to look on falsehood as the disgrace of the coward.

"I do not say anything," she murmured. "It is supposed so, and I am not to contradict it. Madame tells me that it would never do to allow it to be divined that I am —a foundling."

The last abhorred word was very low; it could not be consoled to her even by her own convictions of her splendid though hidden lineage, which she never doubted would soon or late blossom out into some magnificence of heritage and celebrity.

"No!" he said, with a grave tenderness in his tone that moved her strangely. "And yet, though you will deem me cruelly harsh to say so, I doubt if it would not be better for your future if that one memory of what you were could be kept ever before you! I see you to-morrow —farewell."

She stood irresolute and remorseful as he passed away; then, a strain of music caught her ear, and she turned to a mirror near.

"I shall have no beauty if I cry!" she thought, and she choked back the sobs which were fast rising in her throat as she looked at her own reflection.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"SHE has accepted. It is quite natural she should have done so."

He spoke quietly, with a grave courtesy, where he stood on the morrow in the chamber of the Duchess de Lirà. He was quick to conceal all emotion, impassioned and impulsive though his nature was; and he came before them calm, careless, full of the ready wit and of the easy

negligence of his habitual manner. His temper made him fling off pain; and, having once resolved to surrender her up to those who virtually purchased her by superior wealth, he was none the less resolved to conceal from them that the surrender cost him aught. The intelligence that she had thus chosen was no blow to him: he had not dreamed that she would choose otherwise. All that she desired they could bestow; nothing that she desired could he accord her; and he knew well how the affections of such feminine Caprices as Viva were guided by their sunny and unconscious egotism.

The old aristocrat studied him with well-concealed wonder. She knew of the debt that her son had owed to him in the times of the revolution; but she abhorred every form of revolution, and had imagined him a coarse eccentric man of the people who could be dismissed as soon as his Waif were purchased from him, as easily as the husk of a chestnut is thrown away, when the sweet snowy kernel is extracted. She was lost in the same amazement and wrath as had at the first moved her at finding in the bohemian whom she had thought to relieve by taking a burden from his hands, a man who dictated terms to her, and made the presence of a foundling in her house as grave a matter as the betrothal of a princess, and spoke to her with all the dignity and power of an equal, while he fascinated her by an irresistible charm she could neither analyze nor dispute.

Though worldly-wise and haughty to coldness, the aged duchess had a certain gentleness of heart, and a great generosity. The desire of her beloved and only living son was law to her; and although she had viewed at first with aversion and disgust his attraction toward a nameless, and doubtless bastard child, she had ended by feeling a woman's tenderness for the child herself; whose native grace, pride, and refinement, assimilated themselves so rapidly to her own. Her son's desire had been at first inexplicable and most unwelcome to her: but now, there had come into her thoughts a vague conception which she did not like to brood upon, yet which insensibly served to reconcile her to his wishes: the threatened *extinction of his* race was a great misery to

her, her craving for its perpetuation still stronger than her pride; as it seemed he could never be wooed by those of his own rank,—since the days of his earliest youth when a cruel treachery had taught him his alienation from their sex,—would it not be better that he should wed even with a peasant than leave his name to perish?

If this were ever to be so, the preparation and commencement for it must be, she resolved, the absolute and unalterable banishment of all things connected with the girl's past life. Therefore her chagrin and her wrath were great, when in the man whom she projected to dismiss forever, she encountered as proud a spirit, and as resolute a will as her own, one who scarcely thanked her for her splendid offer, and who dictated conditions as though he, not she, were the patron and the donor.

At his last stipulation, she, had it not been for her son, would have bade him take back his foundling and make a servant, a gipsy, an actress of her, what he would: yet the last stipulation which offended her so deeply was but this:

"I have only one thing more to add," said Tricotrin, when their interview drew nigh its end. "It is to stipulate that I, myself, shall never be denied access to her. You can account for my knowledge of her as seems best to you. I have spoken my desire that she should never be painfully reminded of her past, or led to feel that she is deemed of an inferior class to that in which she will henceforth move; you may be certain therefore that my presence will never be forced on her, unadvisedly or inopportunely. But I will not surrender the right to judge for myself of her happiness or unhappiness. I will not relinquish the power of ascertaining the truth concerning her welfare. I will not consent to become as a stranger to her."

"It is impossible," commenced Madame de Lirà; but her son, standing beside her chair, laid his hand on hers:

"Nay, madame, it is but just," he said quietly.

"It is but just," repeated Tricotrin, calmly, "to myself and to her. All that I know of her history you know; and that all is nothing. But I have taken, of my own will, the maintenance and direction of her life Having

once assumed those, I should err to her if I did not continue to hold, at least, the ability to know how life goes with her in her future. I have said, and I repeat it if that be needful, that I shall exercise the right with all due regard to her position or your prerogative; but the right itself I shall not relinquish. She will see me very rarely, very rarely indeed, if she be happy; but whenever she needs me—if ever she needs me—I shall be there."

"Surely!" interposed the duke, still with that gentle touch of his hand on hers, entreating silence from his mother. "Do not think that we seek to teach her either ingratitude or oblivion."

"There will be no need to teach them. Both will come self-sown! Nay! Do not think I say this either in irony or blame. She is human; why should we expect her to be above humanity? I thank you for your kindness toward her. I see in it a beneficence to myself. For evil would have touched her in obscurity and want of riches. You have saved her from the chance—the certainty—that in the only life she could have led through me she would one day have cursed me that I ever came between her and the death that was allotted to her in her infancy. To you, madame, I need say nothing. You are a woman,—I need not remind you that she is worse than motherless? You are of gentle blood,—I need not bid you remember that a scornful word, which is a jest to the well-born, can sting like a serpent what is desolate and dependent? You are aged,—I need not solicit from you sympathy and patience with the fanciful enthusiasms and wayward ways of youth? The gift of your gold will be the generosity that the world will appraise. It is the gift of your love and your gentleness that I would bespeak for Viva. An old peasant-woman gave them; they were all she had to give. But—unless they be added to your treasures likewise, the child, amid riches, will remain poor indeed. I will bid her farewell now; and then—she has her will, she is yours."

His voice was calm and unbroken throughout the words, yet there was an accent in them that thrilled through the hearts of his hearers; and, as she heard, dimmed with a

strange unwonted emotion, the keen eyes of the chill, imperious, disdainful protectress of what had forever abandoned him.

"He dictated to *me!*" she murmured, as he quitted the chamber, moved as she had never been through many years, beneath whose ice the love she had borne her son had been the only living thing of warmth. "And you called him a man of the people, my son!"

"He calls himself so——"

"Of the people? Of the mob? Ridiculous! He has the voice of a man born to rule; he has the grace and the negligence of courts. What is there of the populace about him?"

"Nothing save his sympathies. They are wholly with the people."

"Bah! that is no rule. One is sometimes tired of one's self—of one's order. How else would you get your Egalités, your Mirabeaux? There are conservative workpeople; there are democrative princes. You know nothing else of him?"

"Nothing. No one knows anything of Tricotrin."

"Tricotrin! Pshaw! Tricotrin! Is that a name? It means nothing!" answered the old patrician, with impatience. "That man has borne some other name; that man must have been noble once!"

"Why so? He is a scholar, an artist, a genius, but a bohemian, nevertheless, to the core. For the twenty years and more that I have heard of him he has been simply what he is, a lawless wanderer of the '*école buissonnière.*'"

Madame de Lirà shook her silvered head.

"No matter! He must have *race* in him. Heraldry may lie; but voices do not. Low people make money, drive in state, throng to palaces, receive kings at their tables by the force of gold; but their antecedents always croak out in their voices. They either screech or purr; they have no clear modulations. Besides, their women always stumble over their train, and their men bow worse than their servants. But this man, look you,—he has high blood in his veins, however he come by it. And—he suffers."

Her acute, penetrative acumen had pierced to the truth, though with it she had never once seemed to have a pulse of sympathy. Her son paced slowly and musingly to and fro her chamber, with an anxious shadow on his face.

"I hope not," he said, with a pang of self-remorse. "I hope to heaven not! I have done for the best——"

"Bah!" murmured the duchess, with her delicate irony. "Do not use those words. Nobody ever takes refuge in them except when they divine they have—done wrong. Half the misery of this world is made by persons 'doing for the best,' instead of leaving others alone to do just as they choose! It is 'best' for her, of course—the pretty, heartless thing. But for the man,—it is a little bitter. Your silver Harlequin and my gold shoe-buckles outweigh him, and all his years of care, with her; it is a little bitter—that!"

"It must be so—indeed!" murmured her son; and for his good deed he felt a deeper remorse than many feel for brutal crimes.

He had gone to her where she had stayed during the hour of their converse, in a dainty, radiant little room that was called hers. She was kneeling by one of its couches, with her head bowed down upon the pile of cushions, as he entered. She had chosen as her desire and her ambition dictated, chosen as her vanity entreated, chosen as the evil spirit that her Prince Fainéant had awakened in her, tempted and urged her to do. And yet there were sorrow and shame on her; she felt unworthy in her own sight. In the moment of her triumph she felt humiliated; in the very seizure of her wishes she felt disappointed.

Though vain things too often obscured it, the core of her heart was pure and brave; its fibers were of nobler stuff than the egotisms and the frivolities that surrounded it. There were dauntlessness and truth enough there still to make her know that she had acted basely; that the humblest peasant-girl working in the vineyards in summer droughts for her own existence, was more near to true dignity and freedom than was she; that the coarsest shepherd or swineherd, keeping his herds upon the plains, and giving of his poor wage to the parent or the

benefactor who had reared him, was nobler and more grateful than herself.

Her pride told her that she should refuse all alms however disguised in a magnificent liberality; her conscience told her that she should reject all temptations, however glittering and alluring, which would banish from her the lives that had sheltered and succored her own. She was well aware that she was won by the purples and fine linens, the brilliancies and the aggrandizements of the bribe by which she was enthralled; and she was worthless in her own eyes.

For the second time in her life she shrank from the presence of the only living creature that she loved; in his gaze she felt an accusation; in his voice she heard the accents of a judge. Though she had done naught against him she felt as though she had betrayed him; she had forsaken him; she had denied him; she had been ashamed of her allegiance to him. She knew that she had sinned as sinned the faithless disciple who denied his master.

The bread of life, and the food of the spirit, had alike come to her from his hand and from his voice; he had bestowed on her daily bread through his charity, and had raised her soul toward high imperishable things by his words. She owed him a greater debt than the nourishment of her mortal form; she owed him the rescue of her mind from the sloughs of ignorance and vice;—and the way that she paid this debt was to desert him for the bribes of wealth! Her truer nature told her that, although following in its flight the gilded arrow of ambition, she had in that desertion left the greatness which was pure and lofty for the greatness which was a toy of tinsel.

To be true, to preserve truth unstained at any cost, had been the one lesson he had ever taught her; and she would be henceforth a lie—delicate, sunlit, harmless indeed, but still a lie to herself and the world.

When the vine wreath had dropped, crushed and broken on the floor, Viva would have given the world, if she had owned it, to bring back the bloom and the freshness to the bright crown that she had scorned because the people had woven it, and a great man had seen her wear

it. Her old child-life that she had despised and rebelled against because it was obscure and simple, and led amid peasantry,—would she sigh as vainly for it, she wondered, as she had done for the lost grape garland?

Yet she cast it from her heedlessly and willingly.

Until the vine leaves of youth are faded, who knows their value or sweetness? None, alas! while yet the violet down is on the grapes, while yet the hair that they crown is unsilvered by time.

Some vague sense of the bitter fact that corrodes all human life—the fact that desire is everything, fruition or possession but little—came to Viva, in the granting of her wish, as it comes to the lover, the monarch, the bride, the hero, the statesman, the poet, all alike, when that which they have sighed for, and thirsted for, lies feasted on to satiety within their tired grasp.

Viva had gained the "great world;" and because she had gained it all the old things of her lost past grew unalterably sweet to her now that they no longer could be hers. The brown, kind, homely, tender face of grand'-mère; the gambols of white and frolicsome Bebée; the woods where, with every spring, she had filled her arms with sheaves of delicate primroses; the quaint little room with its strings of melons and sweet herbs; its glittering brass and pewter, its wood-fire with the soup-pot simmering above the flame; the glad free days in the vineyard, and on the river, with the winds blowing fragrance from over the clover, and flax, and the acacias and lindens; nay, even the old, quiet, sleepy hours within the convent-walls, lying on the lush unshaven grass, while the drowsy bells rang to vespers or compline;—all became suddenly precious and dear to her when once she knew that they had drifted away from her for evermore.

But never yet so dear or so precious that they made her waver in her choice. The young wood-dove fluttered her white wings in impatience for their flight from the forest-covert to the rose aisles of kings' gardens.

And he—thanked God that he had found strength, against himself, to bid her go where heart, and fancy, and desire had already taken flight, as he beheld her on that

morning in which, for the last time, he was with her as the guide and guardian of her life.

She had been robbed from him, less by the tempting of others than by the discontent of her own soul. It was cruel as the serpent's tooth to relinquish the grace of her caressing ways, the fairness of her perfect loveliness, the watch of her bright and wayward intellect, to others.

He who loved Mankind, but who had long had no special love within his heart, had grown in the last few months to passionately cherish and desire her. Yet to hold by force, what he could not gain from fidelity, would have been an egotism and a baseness impossible to him.

"You think me wicked!" she murmured, as he stood beside her. "You think me ungrateful—selfish—full of greed? I told you the other night that I would not take their charity, however splendid it might be—and I have taken it. I have——"

"Hush!" he said, gravely. "Speak of it no more—never more. You have chosen—chosen where your desire already had run before you. You have not known when you were happy; such ignorance is ingratitude to fate. You are happy now, with such happiness as comes from granted wishes; be wise enough to know it."

"Ah, yes!" she said, with a sudden vibration of passionate repentance in her voice. "I have my wishes; but I feel weak and guilty in the joy of them. Just so I longed for jewels; but when that young prince gave me them, although I loved them, I never felt at peace. And it is just so now!"

"Child,—what title have you, do you think, to escape the doom of all humanity? You desire—you possess—and you find repentance and satiety already lying, in wild justice, at the core of the thing you have coveted. You are no exception; you have the common fate of all mortality."

"But then it is because what I desired was wrong When I wished for the vine-feast, when I wished for your coming, when I wished for the swallows' return, when I wished for a sail on the water, it was not so;—I was so happy when my wishes came——"

"Because your desires then were innocent. Nay, they

are now no guilt, but they are corroded, they are born of envy and the lusts of wealth; and their advent is not peace, because your conscience is in unrest at their purchase."

"Because I know myself so false to you!" she cried, in that breathless terror of a sudden remorse. "Because, while I love all these things that I gain, I know myself so base, so unworthy, so unfaithful to you who have been to me in the stead of father, mother, brethren, friends, and home! Because I know that all my lifetime spent in service and fidelity to you could not repay you all the long years debt I owe! I choose the life they offer me,—I cannot help but choose it, it draws me to it with a sorcery. I pine, I long, I thirst to be in greatness, and if I had refused it and had gone back with you, the evil in me would have made me vile, the longing in me would have made me restless, the discontent in me would have made me your torture, not your blessing! I cannot help what I do. Forgive me for it if you can!"

The impetuosity, broken and vehement, of the words, but ill told the conflict in her heart; the conflict betwixt the irresistible delights of that new world which tempted her, and the remorseful clinging of her old affections to their severed ties. He heard in silence; the time was past when it could give him either hope or dread; when it could move him to expectation or disappointment.

Through all these years he had taken thought of her,—the young forsaken creature for whom no other cared,—he had denied himself that she might enjoy; he had put down the wine-cup untasted that she might have bread, oftentimes; he had broken in the careless laughter-loving indolence of his temper to the deliberate acceptance of labor, that the trust he had self-assumed might be borne out by her maintenance. And all this was counted as naught; all this was swept aside as though it had never been, by the first proffer of a rich man's gold!

But it was his nature to give lavishly and royally; it was his nature to appraise as nothing the good that he did to others; therefore no word of reproach escaped him where he stood alone with her, on this morning when she accepted as a charmed gift from a beauteous fate the life

that would sever her from him forever. One thing only, in which would have been for her the deepest reproach of all, had not her self-absorption prevented her being stung by it, did he ask her. It was simply,

"Viva,—do not wholly forget me!"

As it was she felt in that one moment of its utterance a pang such as rarely struck through the playfulness and pride, the vanity and airy willfulness of her nature.

She looked upward with impassioned feeling.

"Forget you! If ever I do may God himself forget me!"

He shrank slightly, as though the future veiled from her was clear to him; as though oblivion of himself were so sure and so inevitable that in her words he heard her self-invocation of abandonment by her God.

"Make no rash vows," he said gently. "Do not touch the future; let it come as it will. Though you do utterly forget me may all that I wish for you be with you to your life's end."

"But how *could* I forget you!" she cried, as if in terror at that doom which to him seemed so certain, and to her so impossible. "Could I grow so base, so cruel, so vile, so brutally unworthy of all your love and pity?"

He smiled: the smile she had so often seen of late; of a sadness she could not gauge, of an irony she could not comprehend, of a bitterness she could not fathom.

"Nay; you will only grow—a beautiful woman and worldly. No more! An ingrate? Well! are you not that, my little one, to the good old creature you call grand'mère? Her heart hungers for you, you know that well, yet for sake of Madame la Duchesse, and the dresses, and the pleasures, and the jeweled toys, you will leave grand'mère to sorrow alone, and be solaced as best she may!"

Viva's face crimsoned.

"It is selfish, I know. It is wicked!" she murmured. "But grand'mère always said 'never mind me, my child; do what pleases you;' and in a little while I will get them to let me go and see her, and I will show her all my pretty things, and take her some presents, such as she

"No!" he interrupted her with an accent that was almost savage in its intensity. "Do not insult what you desert! Your absence will shut the last lingering light out of her life; do not think to heal the wound that you have made by gifts bought with rich people's gold!"

She was frightened and stilled by his sudden violence; with it there seemed to break on her all the strength and the value of this great love, all its grandeur and its rarity, with which she had played, knowing no more of its force and its beauty than a little child playing with sapphires and diamonds knows of their worth. With a sudden impulse of remorse, and fear, and repentance, she nerved herself to sacrifice all her ambitions and all her delights.

"If you wish it let me go home!" she cried, in sudden and sincere renunciation. "If it pain you let me stay there always! I would not give you an hour's sorrow for all the bribes of France!"

But in the cry there was only a love that entreated to stay near him for his sake, not its own; a love as of a child's petulant pliant affection; a love that to the burning passions of the man was well-nigh worse than none; a drop of dew when he thirsted for the ocean, a gleam of light, making the darkness greater, a Tantalus touch upon the lips of the fruit denied to them, a ray of the pale moon when he longed for the full rich glow of southern suns.

But all that he felt he restrained.

"Not so," he answered her. "The die is cast and you must go, Viva. And—to wish for the time to come when you should desire to return would be to wish your dreams false, your faith betrayed, your paradise poisoned by the serpent, your glorious hopes all cheated and misled. It were to love you ill to wish you back at such a cost. No! As you are happy in your new life so will you forget your old; as you go nearer the fruition of your prayers so will you go further from me. So be it, if for your joy."

Once again there stole upon her with a sense of terror, and of guilt, in her own unworthiness, some perception of the majesty and the purity of this martyred love passion which asked nothing for itself but all for her. She trem-

bled greatly, like one who leaves hold of some long-tried and never-failing support to plunge down into an unknown abyss.

He saw that, and in his infinite self-sacrifice hastened to comfort her, and to lead her thoughts from what he suffered.

"Now listen to a few last words," he said softly, with an effort, so successful, at his old familiar tone, that she was stilled and reassured. "You go to what you desire: you will have riches, luxuries, gayeties, brilliancies, all around you; you will have indulgence, and in a year or two more, homage. But, Viva, none of these things will suffice to you unless your own heart be at peace. You have a noble nature in much; but you have grave errors that will mar all the rest if they be allowed to grow and to strengthen. You have delight in your loveliness,—that is natural: but the illness of a week, as I have reminded you ere now, may sweep it away forever. How will it be with you, then, if your soul has been anchored on the allurements of your face? Win regard and attachment on something surer. You are too proud, and everything in your new existence will tend to heat and to pamper that fault. If you have any tenderness for me you will strive against that besetting sin of yours, or it will make you very cold, very cruel, very arrogant, very avaricious! It will kill all the divinity in you as surely as the frost kills the flowers. Nor will it, like the frost, leave the good root below unseen, but still not slain, to blossom out again. For the nature frozen by the ice of greed, and vanity, and unscrupulous ambition, there comes no spring: but all is night and winter there. Keep only such pride as shall ever rise above all taint of falsehood or of meanness, and gain you that true dignity, a stainless name. To Madame de Lirà, who henceforth will have authority over you, you will be gentle, grateful, with such reverence as becomes the young to the old, and never forgetful that you owe her very much more than it will be in your power ever to repay. And for the rest, —well!—the future must bring you what it will, but you will have the surest shield to meet it, if you gain for yourself that temper which adversity cannot appall, and pros-

ot exalt, which knows not fear as it knows not

vanity, and which in trial is dauntless, as in happiness it is gentle and pitiful of others. I have read you a homily, Viva mine, but I do not think it will be altogether forgotten; and if,—as you have said,—you deem that there is any question of debt betwixt you and me, and you would care to reward me, and to pleasure me for the little I have done for your childhood, show me thus thy sincerity and fidelity;—by curbing what I who love you best have blamed, and by keeping your glorious nature uncorrupted from the world. When you are tempted, Viva, by your beauty, and glad pride, and brilliant besetting sins, that seem to have no evil to you, because they are masked in such proud and witching disguises, think of this that I have asked of you;—if I have had place in your heart one hour you will have strength to resist temptation then."

His voice had deepened from the playfulness with which he had at first spoken, into a grave and earnest softness, but into no other tenderness than that which he had ever had of old with her; they were wise and gentle counsels, and all that he called, not unjustly, her more glorious nature awoke and stirred in instant and ardent response.

"I will, I will!" she murmured passionately. "I will remember every word; every time that I am proud, and wayward, and wicked, I will think of you; I will try to be all you will; I will pray night and day to God to make me so! And,—as for forgetting you,—Viva will never love any one in the wide world as she loves you. Never, never, never!"

Tricotrin did not answer, but he laid his hand on her fair, bowed head, with a smile infinitely beautiful, infinitely mournful.

He foresaw the future more clearly than she. There was a long silence in the little luxurious chamber; while the winter sun fell through the deep-hued painted panes, and touched them where they stood with light; then she clung to him with her old caressing grace: "Play to me once—once!"

He looked on her, still with the same smile.

"Child, however thy new life indulges thee, and strews

thy path with roses, thou wilt not be more spoilt than thou hast been as a Waif!"

Then he bent his head, letting her desire be his law; and that music, which had given its hymn for the vintage feast of the Loire, and which had brought back the steps of the suicide from the river-brink in the darkness of the Paris night, which sovereigns could not command, and which held peasants entranced by its spell, thrilled through the stillness of the chamber.

Human in its sadness, more than human in its eloquence, now melancholy as the Miserere that sighs through the gloom of a cathedral midnight, now rich as the glory of the after-glow in Egypt, a poem beyond words, a prayer grand as that which seems to breathe from the hush of mountain solitudes when the eternal snows are lighted by the rising of the sun,—the melody of the violin filled the silence of the closing day.

The melancholy, ever latent in the vivid natures of men of genius, is betrayed and finds voice in their Art. Goethe laughs with the riotous revelers, and rejoices with the summer of the vines, and loves the glad abandonment of women's soft embraces, and with his last words prays for Light. But the profound sadness of the great and many-sided master-mind thrills through and breaks out in the intense humanity, the passionate despair of Faust; the melancholy and the yearning of the soul are there.

With Tricotrin they were uttered in his music.

Other arts Earth still mingles with and profanes; passion is in the poet's words, the senses wake with the painter's voluptuous hues, and the sculptor dreams but of the divine beauty of a woman's form; but with music the soul escapes all bondage, and rises where the world has no share, unclogged and uncompanioned. His heart spoke in those wild, pathetic, nameless, melodies as it never spoke in human language: he who should have read them aright would have read this man's life by its master-key.

As Viva listened to the harmonies which had been her dearest delight from her earliest years, the slow tears gathered in her eyes, the flush faded from her face, leaving it pale, she pushed back the shining masses

of hair off her brow, and stood as she had stood long before in her infancy, when the Straduarius had decided her destiny.

Her future seemed to float before her in the rich fantastic passionate waves of sound that filled the stillness, —that future of sunlight, that future of sovereignty!— and still ever, through all the glory of the melodies, one under-note of deepest sadness seemed to whisper that in all the life to which she went, she should find no love that would equal, in its measure and its sacrifice, this love that had sheltered and shone on her childhood, this love which she had now forsaken.

Then suddenly, the wondrous magic of the music ceased, and dropped, and died; and she threw herself on her knees before him.

"Ah! if I heard that music always, I should never be proud and vain and wayward; I should love and pity all the world; I should do your will, and God's!"

Tricotrin smiled, and the smile was like his melodies.

"Viva mine, were we all what we are in our holiest moments, we were all godlike! Treasure the music in thy heart then; so will it be thy guardian-angel. So shall I have *one* gift to give thee! And now—farewell!"

At that one word, all the anguish of severance came on her; she loved him with fervent, tender, clinging affection, though she loved yet more dearly her vanity and her pride. She had dwelt joyously away from him because she had been so sure she could go back to him; but now that she had to part with him, and from the home that he had given her, without power to return to them, the fondness that she bore for both conquered every other feeling, and she sobbed as though her very heart were breaking, her head bowed on his breast, her hair flung over his arms.

She did not feel the shudder that ran through him at her touch; she only heard the gentleness of the voice upon her ear.

"My child of chance! The fairies call thee to their Avillion where are no toil, no pain, no shame, to gall thy heart and fret thy pride. No poor grape garland to be heavy on thy brows, no lives of labor about thee to make

thee dread a great man's sneer. Go with a happy heart, and spoil not thy present by looking backward at thy past. The past, however bright when it was 'present,' is ever dark with vain desire when it lies behind us, like the lands from whose sky the sun has long gone down. Remember that!"

She made him no reply; but silently clung to him weeping in a very convulsion of love and of repentance; a summer tempest soon to pass, yet none less vivid and desolating, because fated to be evanescent.

He looked mutely down upon her; and where her head was hidden on his breast she could not see the yearning passion that his eyes spoke, for one moment unrestrainedly, because it knew itself unread and unsuspected.

"Ah, true to thy sex!" he murmured bitterly. "Thou mournest me now, a day hence and I shall be forgotten!"

A burning flush dyed her face as she lifted it with impetuous eagerness of denial.

"Never, never, never! I shall never forget you till I die!"

The smile that made her tremble, why she could not have told, was still upon his lips—the smile of so much tenderness, of such little faith.

"You will die early then! Nay! live in joy ever, though not a thought of me pass over thee. My child—my love! Farewell!"

He held her one moment longer in his embrace, one moment longer pressed his lips on hers: then, ere she knew it, drew her still closer yet, once more, thrust her quickly from his arms and left her; their lives were cut in twain forever.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WILD winds were driving snow across the vineyards and the plains in blinding white sheets of powder; the swollen river was black and angry, rushing in stormy tide and eddy between its brimming banks; in spots where its torrent had overflowed, a dark sullen sheet of water spread over submerged meadows or ruined gardens; the night was tempestuous, starless, heavy-laden with snow; through it Tricotrin passed, insensible to the furious blasts, the icy cold, the perils of the flood, the fatigue of every step.

When here and there the dim reflection of some lantern, hung upon some wayside cross to guide the way of travelers, fell upon his face, it was very pale, and his eyes looked straight forward into the unbroken gloom, unblinded by the sleet that drove against them: in his breast curled Mistigri, and with one arm he held her there and sheltered her from the night.

He made his way, by instinct and by habit, to one familiar place; the great chestnut branches were groaning in the gale, the rush of the river below the rocky slope was like the swelling hoarseness of the sea, the wind was tearing the ivy from the stones where it had clung so long, and scaring the birds in terror from its shelter.

There was a ray of yellow light streaming from an oval hole in the shutter; through it the homely interior was visible, ruddy with the cheerfulness of burning wood, and with the form of an old peasant-woman alone within it. Grand'mère sat, by the wood fire on her hearth, half asleep in the twilight, her high white head-dress nodding to and fro, the chestnuts cracking in the embers, the white cat Bebée purring in the warmth.

She started, and clicked across the floor in her wooden shoes, as a knock came on the door of her dwelling. She threw it wide open with her oil lamp held above her

head, and gave a loud glad cry; then she trembled till the lamp rays flickered like a candle flame blown about in the wind.

"Where is the child?" she asked.

"The child is well, grand'mère."

Then he entered and shook off the snow that had fallen on his beard and blouse; and took the little shivering Mistigri from his bosom, and put her kindly down beside Bebée, and unstrapped his knapsack and laid it on a wooden settle. At last with an exceeding gentleness he turned and took the two old withered hands within his own, and looked down into the eyes that had watched him with such mute pathetic entreaty.

"You can bear pain, grand'mère?"

She gazed at him with a hard, fixed, agonized regard that searched his very heart.

"Paris has taken her!" she said slowly, with a terrible bitterness. "I have known it long. Paris is fed with all our blood, all our beauty, all our youth, all our innocence: Paris is never quieted. The children come to the birth and lie at the breast only to be devoured by her when they have fairness or strength in their frame!"

Then casting her serge gown over her head as a matron of Rome cast her robes, she turned from him and leaned against the wall, silent. To her there was no need to say more: Paris, that fatal, beautiful, cruel, pitiless thing that drew all lives within its murderous embrace, had taken the child—all was told.

Tricotrin laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Grand'mère, it is not so bad as you think. Believe me, it is well with Viva."

The old woman uncovered her head, and looked at him with all the fire of her youth flashing through the slow salt tears of age.

"So *they* said,—each one of them! My noble boys! It was well with them they thought—the city was so grand, and the wage so good, and the mirth so gay, how should they have deemed otherwise? Paris wore a smiling front to them; she smiles always, until she sucks the life out of their veins, like the bat that fans men to slumber to kill them. Antoine wrote me it was so well with

him! He fought for liberty, he was kissed on the mouth by fair women who called him a hero; he dreamed of freedom for all France, and of the love and the patience of God breathed into the hard souls of men. That was how she lured him, that Paris, whose stones drank his blood. And he died in his youth, with the balls fired into his breast!"

"I know—I know! But Viva——"

"She has gone where he went!—where his brethren went!" she interrupted him fiercely, every line of her brown withered face quivering with grief and with passion. "They could never come back; nor could she, I know well. It is ever the same with Paris—she draws them all in, the youths and the maidens, and when she has got them, she pits them one against each other to ruin them all—the men to tempt the maidens, breathing lust in their ear, and pressing gold in their hands; the women to lure the youths, kissing them blind with bought kisses, and teaching them the pleasure that kills! How should she come back? Can the clay come unburnt from the furnace? Can the callow-bird return from the throat of the squirrel that has drawn down and devoured it? Why did you not slay her with your own hand rather than take her to that gilded and honeyed death that steals the soul with the body?"

Then, once more she turned her head from him, and wept—wept as the aged weep, without hope.

He waited awhile till her grief, wrought almost to frenzy, should have grown calmer.

In the light of the hearth Mistigri trembled, and watched them with her black and melancholy eyes, and stole closer to Bebée, who, himself, slept and purred on, indifferent, so long as the fire burned bright to warm him.

After awhile, Tricotrin spoke, and told her the truth as it stood, and strove to soften the blow, as best it could be softened, by tidings of the child's joy and safety.

Grand'mère heard him in unbroken silence; her gaze never leaving his face, and reading there that she did not suffer alone.

Of his own trial he said naught; he dwelt only on the brightness, on the security, on the eminence of the future

that Viva had chosen. What was heartless in her conduct he left unrecorded; what was tender and generous he lingered over. Yet, despite himself, the story was told in weariness, and had the chill of grief in it, as the snow drifted up against the lattice-window, and the red flame grew low in its socket.

They knew that never again would the child's form—that had lent such light and grace to the little homely chamber with its blackened elm wainscots and its white-washed walls, and its pendant strings of thyme, and onions, and pumpkins swaying from the rafters—come thither to dance upon the bare floor, and mirror itself in the burnished coppers.

The old peasant heard without answering a word; her face did not even change when he spoke of the offer which the duke, in considerate kindliness, had sent for her to make her home near Viva's new resting-place.

"You need feel no sorrow, no separation," Tricotrin, giving the message, pursued. "They wish that you should live in all comfort and peace near her. They desire that you should go where she will go, and dwell on the Lirà estates, where you will see her most likely with every succeeding autumn of each year. You——"

She rose and stopped him, and spoke for the first time since her paroxysm of dread and of despair at Paris had broken forth, in eloquent, quivering invective.

"Tricotrin—I am an old woman and poor, and the time for my hand-labor is well-nigh passed. But—if so it be willed that I live on and on through other desolate years, I will go out and wash linen in the river, clear insects from the vines, gather fruits for the markets, weed stones from the trefoil, and beetroot, and sainfoin, ere ever I will take bit or drop, log of wood or roof of house from those who have robbed us of her!"

"Nay, it is no robbery. They mean aright——"

"Aright? Can it be aright to build the pile of her glories on the stone of her ingratitude? Can it be aright to bid a young child forget the one debt of her life? Can it be aright to take her into high places, where she shall learn to blush to tell truth of herself? But let that be! I have no wish to say ill of her. She has been as

the core of my heart for too long. Only let them know this,—though I shall hunger like one in famine for the sight of her face and the sound of her voice, I will never go nigh those who have led her astray. I have no title to dwell longer under this roof, which was only kept for her sake; but I have strength still, and I will go and lie down with the oxen, and ask the fowls for their corn, before I will take alms at the hands of your spoilers. I have spoken!"

There was resolve, so strong and so proud, on her face, that it rendered almost beautiful the aged, weather-beaten, sun-bronzed features; her eyes kindled, her mouth set, her voice grew clearer; all the bold, hardy, peasant blood in her rose as it had risen when she was offered the government-alms she flung back, to the rulers who had sent out her firstborn to perish in Africa.

Tricotrin saw and heard; and he bent his head with the reverence he ever gave to the pure honesty of this simple and undaunted nature.

"Grand'mère! There is no need to think of that. This place is yours so long as you shall will to have it so. You cannot deem so ill of me as to think that——"

"Tricotrin, you are a generous man; we know that well," she answered him, with the anguish and the wrath in her eyes softening away. "I have never been two leagues outside my own vine country, and shall not begin my travels now. But neither have I ever lived on alms, nor will I now. While I could serve—*her*, it was just that I should take your bread; but now that I am of no use, how should I justify myself to eat it?"

"Hush!" he said, gently, and his voice had an unutterable sweetness in it. "Every man owes a debt to his mother; mine died ere I knew her. I can only pay it to her sex. Do not fly from my shelter. Your hearth is the only home that I know. Keep it,—lest ever I wander to it weary and maimed. Keep it,—lest ever the child that you lose should find her visions fade as she pursues them, and learn to long for its refuge and pine for its peace."

As he spoke, the brave. strong, sunburnt face, on which

the light from the fire played, grew paler and more tender, till all the passion died from it.

"Tricotrin,—you are a noble heart," she said, slowly. "You know how to cover your charities with the grace and the goodness of souls that give as God gives the sun and the fruits and the harvest. But think you she will ever come back?—nay, listen. I thought so too when my lads went forth; they flung their glad arms round me, and they kissed me with their honest lips, and they all whispered in my ear 'we shall be back so soon!' And the one would come as a great soldier with crosses on his breast; and the other would come as a rich man to wed the little yellow-haired girl at the water-mill, and rear up his young children around me; and Antoine—my handsome Antoine!—would come as a liberator, as a redeemer, as a chief of the people, to bind France in one vast brotherhood of peace. Well! one was slaughtered in African raids; and one was crushed by a building stone; and one was shot down by his countrymen's carbines. That is how they 'come back' to us—the children of our love!"

She turned away, and employed herself in her homely household cares, heaping the wood upon the flames, scalding some red wine in a copper stoup, brushing the snow down from off his outer garment. The peasant instinct and habit of her life led her to labor as the only palliative of woe.

"It is an awful night, Tricotrin," she said, spreading bread and chestnuts before him. "You must have felt the storm bitterly."

He bent his head in silence. The food and the steaming wine stood untouched beside him. Looking at him earnestly, as in the first hour of her anguish she had been too blinded by her grief to do, she saw that the fairness of his face had lost all color, and that the sun-hued waves of his hair were whitening with other silver than the silver of the snow.

And her heart hardened against the child whom she had nurtured and cherished from that early time when the tearful smiling eyes of the forsaken thing had first

looked up at her from the ferns and the blue fraxinella. She laid her brown, wrinkled hand gently on his shoulder.

"Tricotrin,—when my sons went forth, one spoke of duty to his flag, and one spoke of duty to his betrothed, and one spoke of duty to his country; but not one of the three remembered that duty might lie nearer his own hearth; not one of the three remembered that I had endured the pangs of their birth, the woes of their infancy, the fret of their passions, the evils of their maintenance. The children never remember—they live in themselves. But when in turn they grow heart-sick, and are betrayed, and hunger and thirst, desolate amid the wealth of the world, then they remember us, and yearn for us—then we are avenged. She forgets you now. In the day of her necessity she will pray for you, and, it may be, pray vainly."

A shiver, that was not of the cold of the night, shook him as he heard. The deep quivering voice of the speaker had the terror as of prophecy in it.

"God forbid," he answered her, "that ever my vengeance should come so!"

"It would be but justice," she muttered. "But the only justice we get upon earth breaks our own hearts when it falls."

And she left him, and went into her own chamber, and wept bitterly, as the aged alone weep, when the light of their eyes has passed from them for evermore, and none other can ever illumine the brief dark space that parts them from the grave.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"WRITE to me to the care of Mère Rose," he had said, when he had parted from her. "If thou art happy—keep silence. But when aught pains thee, write."

To the house in the Pays Latin, where she had once heard the grisette sigh for those who went to the Rome of their desires, her letters flew, for awhile, swiftly as carrier-pigeons. For the heart of the child was at unrest, and full of love, and therefore full of love's twin-brother, pain.

When the spring deepened to summer, the winged words came more seldom. They were carrier-birds made laggard by the tempting of warm suns and luscious fruits, and by the luring melody of winds and waters.

With the autumn but very few ever came. They were as doves that would not answer to those who murmured their old familiar names, because they better loved the peace and the abundance of the palm-groves in a new and brighter land.

Through the year that followed they almost ceased; one, here and there, in a stretch of many months, still coming, like the single bird that bore the olive-branch of hope.

Not seldom he would make long pilgrimages from north or south, from east or west, to ask that single question: "is there any letter, Mère Rose?"

And when she, leaning from her lattice, would shake her head, with tears in her brown comely eyes, he would turn away.

"So best: it is well with her then."

But the woman would murmur fiercely and sadly, in her throat: "Nay! it is ill."

And he knew that she was right.

With her body, with her beauty, with her youth it was well: but with her soul?

At length, one day in a fragrant spring time, when all the city blossomed and laughed with flower and song, Mère Rose reached down from her casement, and in her hand lay a letter, like a little, white, tired bird.

He took it with a light in his eyes that was not from the bright noon sun: and when he had read it, and another one that lay within it, he reeled slightly like a man under a blow, and his lips grew white, and he stood staring blankly up at the bright sun and seeing naught.

"Is she dead?" cried the woman, from the lattice above.

He looked up at her with blind eyes, and answered nothing, but went slowly away down the long street, with heavy staggering steps, as of one in whom there is no life left.

The city was filled with buds, and blossoms, and green leaves, and with the singing of students and maidens, and with the joyous laughter of children, and with the fragrance of tossing lilacs, blue and white, that were flung upward by boyish hands in the sunlight of the feast day.

But Mère Rose, leaning at her casement, heard nothing, and saw nothing of these. She was looking down the street after the man in whose hand the letter was hidden like a snake that stings the hand which fed it; and from his form, as he passed away into the shadow cast by a dim old gothic church, her eyes wandered into the chamber of the opposite house. The casement stood open; and in the darkness stood the coffin of a woman within.

It waited for burial until the festal time of the May-day had come and gone.

"Ah, thou saidst truly, poor little one!" murmured Mère Rose, gazing into the chamber of death, so quiet and so dark, amid the light and the song and the blossom of the world around. "They come back from Rome —yes! But back to those whom they left—never!"

CHAPTER XXX.

"Is the child dead, grand'mère?" the people of the vine country asked with bated breath and anxious eyes.

"Yes—she is dead," the old woman answered ever: and would say no more to all the eager, curious, unceasing questions that were put to her by those who met her at the little chapel in the fields, or in the woods where she gathered her fuel; on the straight road across the plain, as they rode their mules to market, or by the towing-path as they walked above their slowly-laboring boats.

"She is dead," was all she answered: and they knew that it was just thus that she had spoken when the story had come from Paris, creeping tardily and terribly through the awe-stricken country in its hot hush of midsummer silence, that her youngest-born had fallen under the bullets, with the hymn of liberty on his lips.

"The child was dead," they murmured among themselves: they did not feel much wonder; she had never been one of them; she had never seemed of their mould and of their kind; she had always been invested to their sight with something rare and strange, and not of mortal birth. They had watched her careless, useless, cloudless life among the sunshine and the flowers, so unlike to their own hard, toilsome, and unlovely lives, as they might have watched some paradise-bird, had one flown, of a sudden, down amid the swallows of the hamlets, and the plovers of the fields, with all the colors of the east upon its gorgeous wings. "She was dead," they repeated among themselves; and broidered on the naked barren fact a thousand tales woven at evening with their women's flax upon the wheel, or passed from mouth to mouth with the stone-picking in the cornlands, and the insect-seeking amid the vines

Louis Sarazin, at the ferry, knew the truth; but Sarazin never spoke of it. He only covered over with a piece of

tarpaulin, the bench on which she had used to sit in the stern of his old black boat, and let no passenger be seated there. And he would stand very quietly at the door of his cottage, looking wistfully down the stream, hour after hour, if none disturbed him, with the broken oar or the torn sail in his hand, unmended.

"They all go down that river, see you?" he would mutter to his dog. "But none of them come back; I suppose they never want the old landing-place any more. Is it all smooth water there? Are there no shallows and no speats? Do they not have to row against the incoming tide at any time, I wonder? I suppose not, for they never want the old landing-place any more."

Those who heard him, said that in his great age his brain wandered, that his senses were gone, that he saw in his silent highway the highroad of human life, and grew mad thereon. Only his dog was wiser; his dog only knew his meaning, and pressed more closely, and licked his withered bony hand in tender consolation.

"She was dead:" to all her little native world about the river, on which her glad eyes had opened with so many summer dawns. A few among them said prayers for her departed soul when they kneeled down at the wayside cross, from which the thatched roof of the home that she had shared with the swallows was visible where it thrust itself through its cover of green leaves. But the greater number took the words as holding but a figurative meaning, and believed that the child of the fairies had gone to that strange land whence she came, and whispered marvelous things of her, where they sat by the light of the oak log of Noel, or brought the wagons of grapes to the wine-press in the shade of the autumn-browned boughs.

But away southward, when gossips met in the porch of the dairy-house that looked out over the broad, low-lying water-threaded pastures about Villiers, a great-limbed, brown-faced, tawny-skinned milkwoman, with her arms akimbo, and a brutal laugh on her mouth, scoffed at her neighbors' regret and mocked at their idiotcy.

"Dead? Dead? That is what they always say when one of their angels has fallen! Dead? She is no more

dead than we are. She is gone to riches and shame, that I warrant you. Oh ho! have you forgot the little liar's story of the magic fruit and the sorcerer's ring on the Indian jasmine? And who was the sorcerer except our young lord?—and what do his dainty jewels always betoken? How blind ye are, blind as bats that butt themselves against a barn door when they are driven out of their nests at noonday! Dead? If she be dead, then are my cows dead where they graze yonder. She was bad, I tell you; bad, core through, like a gourd that has the worm. Did she not call us a set of senseless peasants? and she a bastard too, a bastard most like of the man that fed her! Well—I shall know that lily-white face of hers, with its mouth like yon carnation, and its hair like ripened wheat, a score years hence if ever my eyes light on it. Dead? she is no more dead than that mouse that skirries over the floor. She is only—gone to Paris!"

And she laughed again, cruelly, in the mellow waning evening time; for jealousy is lusty of life, and tenacious of it, and is as the toad which can lie stirless under a stone through many seasons, yet keep its sight and its venom unspent, to use when the stone that has held it down is rolled off it.

Now, which was the truer version, hers, or that gentler belief which mourned the child as innocent and lost, none could tell: for to all questions grand'mère answered ever, "She is dead."

And Tricotrin came no more into the vine country at the harvest-time.

The pipers piped, and the maidens danced, and the oxen drew their loaded wains crowned with green branches, and the ruddy blossoms of the declining years; but no more was heard that sweet, wild, rapturous music that had caught in it all the cadences that the fauns of old had danced to in the virgin forests, while yet the world and the gods had been young.

And to the people who had loved him, there seemed a silence through the land.

CHAPTER XXXI.

On the wild western seaboard, a little hamlet hung upon the rocks like a curlew's storm-swept nest, high in air, and overlooking the wide Biscayan waters.

The great black cliffs were dark as night; the chasms between them were yawning pits, of which no men living told the depth; the land for leagues on leagues inland was a desolate heath, a wilderness of thorny gorse, broken only by gray stones of shattered Druid altars.

Life was hard there; a long incessant struggle with all the forces of the earth and elements, a never-ending contest with the winds and waters to snatch the scanty bitter bread of bare subsistence from out the fishers' mouths. In the long, tempestuous, cruel winters, death entered well-nigh every household, and few boats returned with all those who, at their setting forth, had manned them. The children were early braced to peril, and scourged with the stripes of the sharp sea foam. The aged were old long ere their time, and toiled like mules up and down the steep stairs of rock, laden like mules with driftwood, or with weed flung upward by the storms.

There was a little chapel on one of the highest ridges of the rocks, where a light burned steadfastly all through the blackest nights of hurricane. There were a few huts that formed the village, all huddled together in the hollow of the cliff, like callow-birds fearful of coming rain. There were men, melancholy, taciturn, rugged, of a hard simplicity, of a doglike fidelity, like most dwellers of the mountains or by the ocean. There were women with the old, iron heroism of amazonian times, whose naked limbs were beaten by the billows, and whose massive arms wrenched drowning bodies from the breakers, till nothing of womanhood remained in their aspect except in the sad steady gaze of their large brooding eyes.

They were a rough, and sometimes a brutal people.

They were often beset with the torment of famine; their pitiless stony shores would yield them little, and in revenge they were, in many seasons, without mercy to those who were cast away upon their rocks. There were men among them who thought little of drawing a knife across the neck of a wrecked sailor, and robbing the dead of the gold rings in his ears. They were very lonely in their wind-beaten fastnesses, where their only mates were the seagulls and eagles; they grew half savage, as those who live in such isolation will. Hunger bit them sharply at times; and when they were famished they turned on any prey like lions.

There were higher natures among them, on which solitude and privation had not this influence, on which the noble sublimity and terrific grandeur of their shores produced only gravity and sadness; but there were others—and these were the larger number—who would fight over a drowned corpse, for the sake of the purse belted round its body, like wild beasts over a heap of offal, and who looked on the flotsam and jetsam of the seas as their own right divine, with which no living thing from the doomed ship should be left to dispute their title.

And,—yet darker deeds than these made their wild crest of rock a name of terror to mariners. Sometimes it was utterly in vain that the light of Mary and her Angels gleamed in the high spire of the chapel. Sometimes, on the darkest and dreadest nights of late autumn and mid-winter, round a headland where the chapel lantern could not be discerned, high up among the blackest and steepest cliffs, a tar blaze would break into the darkness and send forth a flame that could be seen for leagues across the waters. So that any hapless vessel, laboring in the trough of a heavy sea, beholding the false signal, and by evil fortune mistaking it for that of the Church, came straightway to her ruin, and was dashed keel foremost on the pointed submerged rocks, and impaled upon them; and never again saw the light of daybreak steal over the seas.

Those who lit that beacon of murder were never brought to justice; safe in their caverns and defiles, the

assassins crept safely, by subterranean ways, back to their hamlet and amid their people. It had been safer to thrust a hand into a hornet's nest than to follow and arraign them there. Even their comrades did not rightly know who did the work. It was only when some rarer jewel than common glittered in some fisherman's ear, or some richer-hued scarf was wound about the hips of his mistress, that the rest whispered together, half envious, half abhorrent, that he must be one of those who fired the flame.

In the beginning of one winter food was very scarce in this sea-den. The fisheries had brought little in; the weather had been calm though dull; there had been no wrecks; and though it was known in the hamlet that the death-beacon had thrice been lighted aloft, it had failed to lead any ship astray. They became fearfully impoverished; famine visited them; and the men were forced to bite the salt twine of their nets in their longing to devour something, and the children wasted to skeletons, and died, and were thrust hastily away into holes in the sand.

A horrible longing for the signs of the storms came on them. A murderous prayer for the rage of wind and water often rose to their tongues—a prayer reckless and godless.

At this season one of the wreckers, he whose brain and whose hand had first devised this thing, stole up one midnight through the crooked crevice, on the bare stone of the cliff, that served him as a stairway. His torch was in his hand, and his soul was set on murder. There were bitter north winds driving over the ocean; there were gray fogs and starless skies; there was a single ship striving heavily through a churning sea. It was a fair chance, as he muttered to himself.

In his shingle hut, in the village yonder, no fresh food had touched the lips, for months, of a woman whom he loved. The leathery skin of some salted fish had become too great a luxury for them to obtain; she had been driven to chew the broad ribbon of the seaweeds, and grind the fishbones into the likeness of flour to make bread: and never *made murmur* or moan at her privation,

but only showed the gnawing of famine by the wolfish glance of her eyes and the drawn lines of her mouth.

There rode the ship,—doomed, surely, to perish, if lured here by the light. The rocks, sharp as needles, hard as iron, over which the sullen waters floated, would do his work for him unerringly. Refuse, that to him would be treasures, would be swept up on the in-flowing tide. Food, fuel, most likely raiment, possibly gold, would be hurled up on the foam: human creatures, too, dying or dead, who would, in the mad clinging of men to the riches that they cannot take with them beyond the grave, have bound about them some belt of value or some bag of coin. There would be wherewithal to eat, and to drink, and to be clothed in his darksome and desolate cabin. What matter a deathwail the more on the wind? What matter the ship sinking an hour soon, or an hour late, to her doom?

Ere now he had thrust back a shivering, striving frame into the blinding spray, from which it had well-nigh struggled; ere now he had stunned, with the blow of his club, a girl whose face had risen out of the breakers, with wide-opened eyes of awful appeal in the glare cast upon it from the lightning. He had done such things before, he could do them again, for the sake of an ounce of gold from a finger-ring, of a necklace of beads off a maiden's throat. Gold would buy brandy, the hot, strong, blessed, accursed drink of forgetfulness; and the necklace would show rarely on the long, stately, brown throat of his bona-roba. And in his fashion—tiger's love for tigress—he loved the woman who starved in his hut on the beach.

So he stole through the tortuous, narrow, cavernous way, winding upward, steep as a ladder, cramped as a coffin, going higher and higher, up and up, into the bowels of the rocks above. And every now and then, where he went creeping like a lizard, with the torch between his teeth, he stopped, and softly blew upon the flame that was dying down in the damp and noxious air of the chasm. It was the spark of life to him.

He felt a latent fear, that never before had touched him, of setting light to his bonfire. There had come one among *them* who had set his face steadfastly against this evil

trade; who had sworn that if the false beacon blazed afresh he would unearth the man that fed and fired it, or perish like the ships himself; and these men of the western coast knew that their visitant would keep his word. Therefore the wrecker went with a certain terror at his heart, drawing himself slowly upward, as serpents crawl, through the perpendicular cliff toward his goal that hung two thousand feet and more above the level of the sea.

The fire was ready piled there. It was safe from all discovery. None, save those to whom the secret of those passages through the body of the solid rock was known, could ever attain that height, which rose, a sheer straight wall of stone, up from the shore, and was severed by deep abysses on either side from the adjacent rocks.

He raised himself tediously and painfully up the ascent, in whose narrowed space and fetid air he could scarcely breathe. His hands at last grasped the topmost ledge; he lifted himself gradually on to the highest point, where his beacon was set. The ridge of all the other cliffs, lofty though they were, sank far below him: countless fathoms downward there rolled the gray sullen mass of water. The roar of its waves ascended in a faint hoarse sound, and a dense mist covered all the surface of the sea.

There was no light except the glimmer of the slow match that he bore; no movement save his own, except when a night-bird flew by on the rushing of the north wind. He took sure footsteps on the jagged uneven peak; then set his match to the oil-soaked tow of the torch that he had carried in the grip of his teeth.

The tow caught and flared alight; he lifted his hand to fling the burning flax upon the piled dry touchwood, and the tar barrels of his beacon:—ere he had cast it his arm was seized, the torch was wrenched out of his hand, and thrown flame downward over the cliffs: a man closed with him.

The wrecker was supple and vigorous, sinewy of frame, and skilled in physical exercise,—a giant, whose limbs were braced by the strength of the waves, and whose nerves were trained in the daily habit of peril: but he had met his match in his unknown foe who wrestled with him in the blackness of the night. With the quenched flame of

the torch all light had gone: the sailor struggled by sheer instinct, like a wild beast attacked when it is blinded, and strove to fling his opponent off him and over the rock, into the wailing waves below. The part on which they stood was narrow; a single overpoise would have thrown them down into the gulf beneath, locked in each other's grasp; yet neither thought once of letting loose his hold; both struggled for the mastery.

No word was uttered: it was an even combat of sheer strength, fought on that slender, jutting, slippery ledge, that overhung at such vast height the bottomless pit of the devouring sea.

Thrice the wrecker all but gained ascendency, and had his arms locked round his opponent's waist, and well-nigh lifted him up from the stone on which they stood, to fling him over the edge to meet his death. Thrice his antagonist resisted him, and kept his feet as though they had been rooted into the rock itself.

It was a darkness in which both were blind: both knew that with every moment they might be hurled down two thousand feet of air. Yet still,—neither loosened their grip one instant.

The curlews flew round their heads with shrill outcry; the noise of the sea boomed louder as the spring-tide rushed in; the bitter north wind howled around the peak; —they strove together for dear life on a shelf of granite scarce wider than a horse's back.

The sailor, maddened and brutalized by rage and fear, at length made frantic effort to get free his arm, and draw the knife at his belt from out its sheath His foe felt the movement that he could not see. With swift, keen science the foe closed in, nearer still, with the wrecker; twisted his arm backward as men twist a bough to break it; and seizing him round the loins with the true athlete's skill, shook him, swayed him, lifted him, and stretched him prostrate.

The sailor was stunned: his head had struck upon the granite. His antagonist stood awhile breathless, exhausted, with the sound of the winds and waters surging dully on his ear, and the blood in his veins beating *like pulses.* He could not tell whether he had dealt

death or no: till he stooped, and passed his hand over the motionless body, he could not tell whether it had not swayed forward and been dashed into pieces on the rocks below.

The darkness was impenetrable: even the white flash of a roused seagull's wing could not be seen; he could not move a step lest he should out-tread the narrow limits of the ledge on which he stood. There was not even the ray of a single star through the storm-wrack of the clouds.

He had no means of lighting any of the touchwood that lay near; and if he had possessed any could not have used his means, lest the light should have lured the vessel to that very destruction which he had risked his own life to avert from her. He had no choice but to rest where he was; with his back against the pile of the beacon-timbers, and the northern blasts raging around him.

It had been past midnight when the wrecker had gone forth to his errand: he knew that a few hours would bring the dawn.

Therefore he waited, with the man who, for aught he knew, was dead, lying at his feet, and the hungry sea fretting and raging far down beneath, as though in fury, because cheated of her prey.

The moments seemed as years, bathed in that gloom, knowing that an unfathomable abyss yawned beneath his feet, with no sound but the thunder of the wind among the cavernous cliffs, with no companion save a creature whom he might have slain, or who, if living, might yet arise and fly at his throat.

As he stayed there, a faint spark dropped from the torch among the light pine-boughs that helped to make the beacon, blown by the wind gathered brilliancy, and increased into a flame.

The bright spot caught his eye; with cautious movement he leaned and caught the branch that was on fire; it burned slowly, but gave a dull ruddy glimmer, insufficient to be seen by those at sea, but enough to throw light on the place immediately around him.

He held it to the wrecker's face: the man's eyes changed and glared, his senses had revived, though he had not yet power to move.

"It is you!" he gasped.

"It is I,—move a limb, and I will shoot you dead."

The sailor, lying there half stunned yet, and dazed by the flicker light that was held against his sight, stared stupidly at the glitter of the pistol.

"Why did you not use that before?" he muttered, half conscious, half senseless.

"We should not have been equal: you had no fire-arms."

The man said nothing: he looked in sullen wonder at the face above him, on which the dim red gleam shone faintly. He was awed; and filled with a vague superstitious terror. He did not believe the foe that he had dealt with could be mortal.

"Can you rise?" his conqueror asked him.

He tried to lift himself, obediently: the fall had bruised him, but had broken no limbs. He moved his head with a gesture of assent; his eyes incessantly fastened on the steel glisten of the weapon that covered him.

"You can stir;—very well. Then rise up and lead the way down your accursed passages. Attempt to resist me,—attempt to escape me,—and I will send a bullet through your brain. You know me: you know that I keep my word:—as I kept it to-night."

The wrecker stared at him with the same stupid amaze; as of one who beheld some being of another world than his own. Then, docilely as a dog, he gathered his aching limbs together, and crept slowly along the ledge, down to the aperture by which he had ascended, and into the hollow space that ran through the substance of the rock.

He dared not disobey; he essayed neither resistance nor evasion; he knew that the pistol was leveled at his head, and that its shot would pierce his brain if he attempted to go astray or to turn upon his victor.

The pine branch gave light enough to illumine the tortuous crevice as they dragged themselves through it; he could not turn aside because its narrow twisting tubes had no crannies, no outlets, no hiding-places, and he dared not endeavor to outstrip his pursuer, because he knew his instant death would be the penalty of any attempt

at flight. Once, pausing to take breath, he stole a hasty glance backward.

"How did you come there?" he muttered in his clinched teeth.

"I scaled the cliff."

"You could not! The face of it is as bare as a man's hand."

"That may be; but it is not more bare or more steep than the wall of an Alp."

"God! No living soul ever tried it, but one, and he was dashed to pieces on the shore below."

"So I have heard."

"You had heard that when you ventured it?"

"Yes."

"And yet you came?"

"To stop you from doing fresh murder. That is words enough. Pass on."

The wrecker's breath came hard and fast; his great frame shook slightly with a tremor as with cold; he spoke no more, but crept on his downward way, marveling greatly, and ashamed.

The way was long; the pine-branch had burned down to its last inch, the gray of the earliest dawn was breaking in the rain-swept stormy skies, when they emerged at length from the subterraneous path, and came out upon the low-lying level shore, on which the high tide of the sea was breaking. The dawn was misty, bitterly cold, ushered in by the wild north winds, that drove the sand along in clouds, and hurled the foam of the waves in their faces.

The sailor turned suddenly on him as they came forth into the open air.

"How did you tell I went to fire that thing to-night?"

"I saw you take a slow match in your hand as you left your hut: I had often thought you were the criminal?"

The man hung his head: his eyes still glancing like a cowed wolf's at the weapon that held him to obedience.

"I should not have done it if she had not been starving," he swore with a blasphemous oath. "You do not know what famine is!"

The gaze that kept such stern watch over him softened wistfully.

"Do I not?" he said gently.

Then without more words he went over the league's length of sand and stone that severed them from the fishing hamlet; driving the wrecker before him as a moor-dog drives a sheep.

"Where would you take me?" the man muttered, as they drew nigh the rugged stairway cut out of the face of the cliffs which led to the group of cabins.

"To your fellows;—for judgment."

"They will not let you touch me!"

"That we shall see."

With a quick agile movement, before the fisherman could resist, or scarce knew what was done, he had seized his elbows, drawn his arms behind his back, and bound the wrists tight in the knots of a strong rope he had carried:—the man was powerless.

"You do not know me quite well yet, Rioz," he said quietly: Rioz, gnashing his teeth in baffled fury, and cursing his own folly in letting himself be netted like a lassoed bull, looked at him with a look that through its sullen passion had something of admiration and of reverence.

"Know you!" he muttered. "How should one know you? Are you man, or devil, or god?"

"A little of all, perhaps; like everything else that is human."

Then with the rope in his left hand, and the pistol in his right, he forced the wrecker up on to the heights on which the cabins of his people hung.

In the early dawn the population—in all some hundred souls, not more—were stirring, though the raw mists of the late autumn night still hung over land and water, wrapping both in its dusky and icy shroud. As they were seen, there was a rush, a shout, a tumult, a shrill outcry, from men's and women's and children's voices; the boats, the nets, the huts, the rude beds of dried weed were all abandoned as by one single impulse; the little cluster of dwellings broke into agitated life, as a hive of bees breaks into violent movement when its swarm is

stirred. A score of men were round them on the instant, naked knives flashing in their hands, yells and curses on their lips, wonder and eagerness and fury in their eyes.

The conqueror of Rioz stood unmoved in the din, holding the wrecker like a chained beast.

"This man is the assassin," he said briefly. "If there be any among you who would say fair words for a murderer, let him speak them. I will hear."

The tumult of the blaspheming and threatening voices sank on a sudden as a storm-wind lulls: hardened, brutalized, strong in clannish loyalty, and indifferent of bloodshed as they were, they did not care to take this guilt upon their own heads thus.

The man himself never spoke: he only watched, with intent and thirsty eyes, first the faces of his comrades, then the face of his accuser. There was a dead silence for a moment; then the force of tribe-love and the brotherhood of common habit, common need, common peril, got stronger than their shame; they clamored in unison for his release. One of their brood should not be bound, not be arraigned, not be chastised; one of their race should not be subject to the laws of other men. They were free; they owned no ruler; they acknowledged no code; one of themselves should not be fettered while they had knives to free him. So they shouted, pressing forward in the white sulphurous mist, a throng of reckless, fearless, free-born animals, who owned no kingdom save the ocean, and no master save the storm-wind. He heard them, in peace; knowing nothing more likely than that their knives would be sheathed in his own breast, but never letting loose his grasp on the bound wrists of his captive.

After awhile the rage of words died down once more into an ominous sullen muttering; in that instant's pause he spoke.

"You have had your speech; now give me mine. Night after night, for three winters, a lying light has blazed upon your coast to lure good ships to their destruction. You told me you were ignorant of which among you was the criminal. I believed you. You are brave men; and brave men do not lie. A blacker sin, one more treacherous, one more cowardly, never stained a human

life. It was a reproach to your seaboard; a shame on your manhood, that such a guilt was harbored, and allowed to grow, and thrive, and continue, undetected and unavenged, among you. You did naught in it — whether from fear, whether from conspiracy, I leave to your own consciences. So the work seemed left to my hand, and I did it. I have watched many nights; in vain. To-night I seized Rioz, red-handed in the act; putting his flame to that infernal pile. That his greed might have some miserable spoil—some keg of wine, some bale of wool, some sack of wetted corn, some case of rotting fruit, he was about to light the blaze that would have brought a helpless vessel to her shipwreck, and murdered all the human lives she bore. It has been done many times ere this: more deaths than he could count lie on his soul. For sake of some wretched pillage to sate his hunger or his wine lust, for sake of some glimmer of gold to satisfy the miser's avarice within him, he has doomed men and women and children to death under your waves. You can be brutal enough; you can have scant pity for the fleeting life; you can strip the gold off a woman's throat ere yet her corpse is cold; but if you sanction such murders as these, you are fiends and not men. By this crime you are all disgraced. It is not enough that you may not have set your own match to the wood, thrown your own beam to the pile. That this thing has been done, and been pardoned, and been protected among you, is sufficient to brand you all with its infamy. The blood-thirst of Rioz must run in your veins, though his arm alone had nerve to raise the torch and awake the fire. There are noble souls among you; are they all dead or sleeping, that this disgrace raises no wrath? that this murderer has lived with his sin unvisited in your midst?"

They were silent, touched with remorse, and burnt with shame; knowing that this sin had been harbored among them, half in sympathy, half in desperation; knowing that they had been willing that it should be sheltered in secrecy; knowing that there were others in their community who had shared its guilt and shared its spoils. They dared not claim the murderer again from the hands of his accuser: they dared not either denounce the blood

guiltiness from which their own souls were not pure. They hung together, stilled, enraged, ashamed, uncertain —Rioz looked at them, and laughed.

"Ye are bold comrades at need! Well—I say naught. It was an evil deed: but I am willing to bear its brunt. It was my thought and my act; it was only the plunder ye shared! Kill me,—and ye shall, in justice, kill also every man that ever drank of my wine or borrowed my gold. There! Will not that thin your numbers?"

The accusation and the irony, bearing the sting of truth in them, inflamed against him every creature of the throng, which a moment before had been clamorous to recover him from chastisement. They rushed at him to strike their knives at his half-bare body; they cried aloud for him to be given to them; they hooted him, and reviled him, and demanded that he should be theirs, that they might cast him down from the peak where his bonfire had blazed!

His captor beat them off, and flung them back; and smiled where he stood at bay.

"Rioz! I brought you for their judgment. You believed that they would not let a hair of your head be injured: see now what the fellowship of guilt is worth! Will you have my judgment or theirs?"

The wrecker ground his strong white teeth, and faced the brethren on whose loyalty he had counted.

"Ye curs! ye were willing enough to take a stoup of my rich red drinks for yourselves, and a roll of my bright silks for your light-o'-loves; ye were willing enough to have barrels of rice and tubs of salted meat rolled from the caves to your cabins, in the hard days of your hunger: ye were willing enough to have all that the beacon brought, and ye fed it, and fanned it, and called it a devil that was better than a god, many and many a time. And now ye are gone against me: now ye are clamoring for my body, that ye may fling it down on the rocks! Ye sharks! there is but one man on this shore this dawn. It is this man who has brought me rope-bound like a netted calf. Look you—he scaled that cliff that has no footing for a goat, just to stand between me and that strip; he periled his life fifty times because he had sworn

that my bonfire should never redden the skies again; he could have shot me and flung me into the sea, and he never used his pistol, because I had no arms of that like about me. That was what he did—Tricotrin. And I say that I give my life to him; and I will be judged by him and not by you—ye spawn of the devil-fish, that will suck the dead men's bones but will cry out that ye never took life! He may throw me off the rock, if he will: but ye—come one inch nearer to me, and, bound though I be, I will find a means to brain the best among ye!"

They were men as bold as he, and of like passions; but for once they hung back in silence, and for once their knives were never lifted: conscience made cowards of them.

"Tricotrin," they muttered. "You have taken him, you must deal with him as you will."

Tricotrin looked at them awhile, and answered them nothing: then he turned to the wrecker.

"Follow me, Rioz."

The fisherman followed him without a word; he went down the side of the cliff and on to the flat yellow shore. The day had now broken, with a faint red flush changing the gray of the sky: in the tender shadowy light a single ship was gliding. The wild winds of the night had sunk to silence; the sea, though heavy still, rolled quietly; the vessel moved unharmed over its waters.

He looked at it, then looked at Rioz: the wrecker turned away with a shudder.

He was not altogether vile; though he had steeped his soul in murder he had not burnt out his conscience: if the woman he had loved had not hungered he would not have sinned.

His captor let him stand there awhile, with his hands bound in the knotted cords, and his head sunk on his breast, and his eyes afraid to look upon that innocent thing, afar there on the waters, which, had his guilt had its way, would now have been a shattered, shapeless, sinking mass, with the billows breaking over the place of its nameless grave.

Then he spoke.

"Rioz—you are content to abide by my judgment?"

The wrecker gave a motion of assent.

"You heard what your comrades' sentence would have been. They were willing to shelter your sin while it was safe in secrecy; but when it had been dragged to the light of day they would have cast your body from the rocks. That is ever the fellowship of sin; a parasite when the sin is successful, a traitor when the sin is discovered. If they had been just men, and stainless, their sentence on you had not been too severe: you have doomed others to perish, you could not deem it unjust if you suffered by the same death as your victims. If there had been no guilt among them there had been no marvel if they had cast you forth from them, and slain you, in loathing and in vengeance. But they have not the right to deal thus with you: their own hands are not unsoiled, their own souls are not pure. You have said that you would not rebel if I bade you leap from your beacon-point into the sea; that is to speak idly: you know I am not a murderer: but will you obey as passively if I send you to your rightful due—the galleys?"

The wrecker made no answer. He did not lift his head from his breast; but under his dusky, weather-beaten skin, the blood came and went in rapid flush and pallor, and his teeth were set like a mastiff's.

"So long as the galleys are the means whereby your country visits a criminal for his acts, you cannot claim exemption from them," pursued the grave, gentle accents of his judge. "For less than you have done, men have forfeited their lives upon the scaffold. If for one murder done, in rash passion or jealous wrath, the murderer perish, how shall you escape? You who cannot number the creatures that through you may have been stifled in those waters! you who have doomed the young with the old, the innocent with the guilty, to perish by a hideous death for this sake only:—that your hearth might have fuel, that your trencher might have bread! If your hand have never thrust any struggling body back into the waves—if your steel have never ended the throes of some quivering wretch,—none the less have you bloodguiltiness upon your soul; unredeemed even by such motive as the tyrannicide or the fanatic may plead for his crime.

If I deliver you up to the tribunal; if I take you to the sentence of the galleys; if for all the rest of the years you shall live you shall toil in chains, eat and drink the bread and water of bitterness, be branded to every eye that looks on you, labor like the mill-horse under the threat of the whip, live in a hell of foul utterance and evil passion, never again see the leaping gladness of the ocean, never again breast the winds and the waves in all the exultation of your strength, never again look into the eyes or kiss the mouth of a woman you love,—tell me, will my judgment be more than justice?"

A great shudder shook the mighty limbs of the fettered man.

He was silent many moments. Then at length he answered—the truth, sullen yet resolute.

"No. It will be just."

Tricotrin looked at him long and earnestly.

"Brute and fiend though you are, you have greatness in you," he muttered. "For you have courage, and you have truth."

The wrecker did not hear; his eyes were fastened on the receding ship sailing through the soft, young light; his thoughts were fastened on the dull, drear, endless years that waited for him in the galley-slave's doom.

Tricotrin waited awhile, letting this thought fasten on and penetrate the long-brutalized conscience of the man with whom he dealt.

"If you had gone back from your word, and disputed the fairness of that doom, I should have abandoned you to it as a worthless and hopeless ruffian," he said, curtly. "But you are brave enough, true enough, to confess its justice. There must be some core of honesty in you yet. If the guillotine came down on your neck, you would have no more than justice still. But—I believe that there is that in you which may be worth the saving. The galleys will not save you; they will only cage you in, as a wild beast is caged, and deprive you of the power to do evil. It is a hard question,—how to disarm and punish
e; made so hard by such as you, that we cannot
er that the world's wisdom utterly fails at solving
The galleys will withhold you from doing added

crime; but that will be all. They will make a sullen, venomous, half-mad, blasphemous outcast of you, with all the will to do tenfold worse than you have done, and only held back from action by the irons on your ankles and the scourge on your back. If I see you a score years hence, I shall see in you a man whose last state is a million times darker than his first. You will be a tiger, whose claws are cut indeed, but whose lusts to kill are fiercer than ever. They will paralyze your limbs, but they will only inflame your passions. Well—if you have had no care for the better powers that are in you, why should your rulers have care? If you have chosen to strangle the higher life in you, why should they heed aught save your animal instinct to slay that it is their office to stifle and prevent? You will be treated like a caged wild-beast. Well—why not? since you have far viler savageness in you than the poor beasts, who never slaughter their kind?"

Rioz heard—with dogged patience.

"I do not resist," he said, slowly. "It is right, I dare say. And I said that you should do as you would."

Tricotrin's eyes filled with a great pity.

"Do as I would? Well, then hear what it is I would do. It is this: I would save you from yourself. The galleys would save others from you; but I would go further than that if I could. What lives you have wrecked you alone can tell; I know only that your false beacon has flamed many times, and would have brought yon ship to her death-throe to-night. Therefore I know you—a murderer. In full intent, if not in actual deed. There can be no plea, no palliation, for the vileness of your guilt. Viler, I think, there cannot be upon earth. But even for your deeds there can be atonement; even for your offenses there can be expiation. One life saved by you from those waters will be better amend for your crime than twenty years spent at the galleys. The galleys would simply waste your life, and render it powerless for evil. I would employ your life, and render it powerful for good. There is truth in you, and courage. They must be fit for other things than murder and pillage. Therefore, I will not drive you out to the doom

that by law would await you. I will sentence you otherwise; if you have the force in you I think, you will bear it; if not, you must carry the galley-chain. You will live alone on that rock where your fire has blazed; you will hold no communion with your fellows; you will subsist as you may on the bare food you can glean from the shore and the sea; you are a strong swimmer, a bold sailor, you will do your uttermost to succor and to save all life that comes in peril off your headland. I give you—solitude, hardship, travail, atonement. Being of a brave temper, you will not flinch from the working out of your doom. Go,—you are free."

And he severed the cords that bound the wrecker's strong wrists together.

Rioz had lifted his head, and looked him hard in the eyes, as his condemnation was uttered. As the rope fell from his arms and left him at liberty, a great change passed over his face; its savage gloom passed away, its wolfish glance softened and lightened.

"You trust me?" he muttered. "You shall see, then,—I will do your bidding. It is bitter; yet it is just. I may go mad on that rock; it is like enough. Loneliness kills men's brain, they say. But while I have sense I will be true to you. And you are merciful, too—you leave me the sea, and the wind, and the air."

His voice died in his throat; he turned away to go out to his doom.

But the man who had judged him followed him, and laid his hand on his shoulder gently, yet with firm and tenacious touch.

"Nay—I give you not utter solitude. That were to be more brutal than the galleys. Nor will I leave you to work out my sentence unaided. We will dwell on that rock together."

Rioz stared blankly at him, with glazed, burning eyes wide open.

"You!—you! *You* have done no evil? Why should you care whether I drown, or rot, or go mad? Why should you suffer to save me?"

Tricotrin smiled; the smile was weary, and more sad than tears.

"Chut! When you have famine, you cure it in one fashion; when I have famine, I cure it in another. There are two treasures we may both find on that bleak, wind-beaten headland—yours expiation, and mine peace."

And for three long years he dwelt there—sole companion of an assassin. There were many lives that he saved from the pitiless waters; but there was one life that he saved from a deeper abyss than the lowest depths of the ocean.

It was thus that he dealt with the sorrow within him. It was thus that he wrenched the iron from out his own soul, by wringing the blackness of guilt from the soul of another.

CHAPTER XXXII.

In midwinter all Paris was dancing.

Paris dances as nothing else can under the sun or the stars. Did she not dance when her stones ran blood; dance when dynasties fell at her word; dance on the icy glacis of Brèda; dance while the steel cut down through her loftiest throats; dance when the bastard son of Louis Quinze drowned with the roll of his drums the dying words of Louis Seize? Paris dances ever: beautiful, terrible thing, half child, half wanton, twin angel and assassinatress that she is; dances on under the million lights of her winter-nights as under the glorious suns of her summer-eves, under the fetters of tyrannies as under the banners of freedom.

They danced in the palaces, they danced in the mansions, they danced in every hall, and coffee-room, and concert place, and singing-booth, and covered garden, in this winter-time. In every spot feet flew, like autumn leaves blown by wild breezes; and laughter echoed like the chimes of sleigh-bells; and men and women went mad with the joyous delirium of motion. Specially they

danced in an abandonment of revelry in the great hall of the Elysée Montmartre; grisettes, and students, and fruit-girls, and working men, and all that was maddest and brightest of the labor-world and the student-world of Paris. They lost all sense save that one sense of the hot, intoxicated delight of boundless, leaping, whirling, spinning, unceasing motion; like the whirlwind in its speed, like brandy in its strength, like tigers' frolic in its play. They danced as not even in Paris that night did any dance elsewhere. For above the noise of the hired bands, which, indeed, did sink hushed and abashed in rivalry by it, was the music that Paris loved best, the music that had in its marvelous melody all the color of a Titian, all the glow of strong wine, all the rush of a swift-running river, all the revelry of a royal carousal. One played for them who would not play at the bidding of monarchs; but who cast out, to those who had not gold to purchase pleasure, the lavish treasures of his genius.

That music could do with them as it would; and now it bade them dance on through the long winter's night, and forget that cold, and pain, and hunger, and toil and envy were their daily portions in the world that was white with its new year's virginal snows.

The player laughed oftentimes as he played, with rich gay laughter; but oftener still there came the look in his eyes as of the dreamy deep meditation, the awed surprise and yet serenity of one who beholds visions that none around him see. His face was the face of a poet; and it had but more fire, more force, more beauty for the silver-white waves of the abundant hair, dashed back like a lion's mane. Hour after hour the music pealed out, untiring, exhaustless; music for which kings would have rained down their wealth, for which these dancers of the populace could only give their love. But this one gift they gave in lavish measure; and when at length the melodies ceased, the vast crowd pausing, shouted as with one throat such a cheer as years before had rung out for the great and beloved tribune of the people, when Gabriel Mirabeau had paused among them.

Such welcome, the cannon of royal entries, the troops

of Imperial guard, the magnetized fear of a subject nation, cannot give, though trumpets call, and drums roll, and artillery thunder from dawn till sunset.

He could have led them where he would—these bright, wild, tender, ferocious children of Paris, so idolatrous in worship, so merciless in hate. He could have led them where he would, to hurl down the gates of palaces, to dash aside the serried ranks of guards, to scatter princes as chaff before the winds, to steep new-born liberties in a fell baptism of blood.

They tossed flowers high in the air; they flung up their arms in the bright light; they thronged about with passionate eagerness; the breasts of the women heaved like waves under a storm, the brows of the men burned red with the fires of freedom struck alight by his art in their souls. He looked down on their upturned faces and on their breathless, tumultuous homage, and smiled;—the smile whose meaning lay far beyond them.

"My children! No gratitude between *us*. Is there not love?"

Tricotrin — bohemian and wanderer, nameless and homeless among men — had a kingdom greater than monarchs held, a power greater than the scepter can command.

Through the bitter brilliant wintry night he walked, later on, straightly and swiftly, with the free long step of a forest animal, along the chill snow-covered streets of Paris. As he went he sang, in a voice that rang through the stillness, and made the sullen frozen patrol listen, with a smile on his face, to that joyous, drinking, and amorous carol, "*Sur deux levres roses:*"

"I unlearn all my Latin
On two red lips of satin,
And study night and morning,
All other science scorning,
The art of those twin roses!

High in air the sky-lark sings,
As to me a maiden brings
Fruit ripe as her breast is white,
And wine that is full of light,
And red as her cheek's roses!

No chair of state can lure me,
No classic bribe insure me,
But all the lore of ages
I gleam from those sweet pages,
Of Love's own leaves of roses!"

The snow was falling heavily, and was deep upon the earth: he went through it, and over it, with a step firm as a soldier's, light and free as a gipsy's. An old man dragging himself wearily and painfully along, shivering, glanced wistfully at his lighted meerschaum. He stopped, pulled a knot of tobacco and a pipe from his pocket, filled the bowl and lit it; then gave it to the aged creature.

"Smoke and forget, my friend! The pipe is our best comrade after death!"—then he went on chanting his rose-song.

A little child lay curled on a doorstep, blue, numb, almost frozen, quite heart-broken, sobbing himself into a fatal slumber. Tricotrin paused again, lifted up the boy, and shook him from his trance: in the little, weary, whitened face there were exceeding innocence and grief.

"Have you no home?"

"No."

"No mother?"

"No."

"How old are you?"

"Six, I think."

"And all alone?"

"All alone."

"Not of Paris?"

"No. My father came from the west—very far away,—to get work; and there was none: they are ceasing to build, they say. So we starved; and my father killed himself. He is in that terrible black house by the river——"

"And has left you and Paris a legacy to one another? Scarcely fair; since without him you would have remained in the peaceful regions of the Unarrived: and disembodied souls neither want bread nor get blue with cold. Well! you see that passage, and the door under the third lamp? Run quick there; ask for the woman of the house. Tell her that Tricotrin has sent you: that

you are to sleep on his bed, be warmed at his fire, have some milk and some bread, and forget yourself in dreamland till the morning. Then—well then we will see what substitute we can discover for this impolite father of yours, who sent you into this best of all possible worlds and never had the decent complaisancy to secure you a crust in it. Off, little one—quick!"

The child stared up at him through the falling snow with wide-opened wondering eyes, thinking of the figures of the angels Gabriel and Michael that he had seen in churches, and marveling which of the twain this was that now had mercy on him in this bleak and brutal night. Then,—remembering him of the milk and bread of which this grand and pitiful angel had spoken, and moved by his famished desolate heart,—he looked up once swiftly, half afraid, then threw his arms about his benefactor's knees and covered his feet with kisses. Tricotrin shook him softly away.

"Chut! I am no god—only a stray thing like yourself. Go quick! you want the bread and milk, and the wood fire."

The child ran, with fresh life put in his chilled starved limbs: Tricotrin went on, singing his drinking-song.

A little way farther down the street there sat a small, brown, shaggy, shivering dog, of no value, of no beauty, shaking all over with the cold and howling piteously. He paused once more, and stroked it, and talked awhile to it, and its grief fell into a lower key, and became a plaintive sighing sound. Its bones were almost through its skin, its eyes were bleared and blind, its misery was great.

"Get out, you moaning brute!" cried a woman from a garret-lattice above, as she thrust her head into the darkness and aimed at the little dog a heavy billet of wood.

Tricotrin caught the wood as it came, and saved the cur the blow.

"Friend," he said, quietly glancing up, "if you had sent the famished thing a piece of a loaf, it had been softer to his stomach and to my hand!"

The woman peeped at him by the faint gas gleam.

"Is it you, Tricotrin?" she said, half sullenly, half

ashamed. "I would not grudge the mongrel a bone; but it is such a wretched beast to howl. Look you: it belonged to a young man that lived here; a fool who was forever scribbling over every scrap of paper he could find, and thinking he was born to be a poet—God's mercy! Well—he could not buy a leek for his soup at last, and he had no shirts but the one he had on, and he could do nothing but scribble, scribble, scribble. So the other day we had to break his door open, and we found him stark and stiff on the mattress,—there was a charcoal pan just burned out, and all his poems were a little heap of rent paper. Now that cur you see there belonged to him: and drive it away how we will, it always comes back, and sits under his window, and howls like that. Who is to bear such a noise? It will not go away. And who is to feed it, a thing worth nothing? I will have it flung in the river, or sell it to a student to cut up with his dissecting knife."

Tricotrin took the little animal up in his arms, and stroked afresh the matted broken hair.

"Fidelity pays thee ill, poor little wretch!" he murmured. "Ah! thou art not alone!"

"You have none of that dead lad's writings?" he asked aloud.

"Not I," the woman answered from above. "He had torn them to bits, I tell you. There was one roll indeed, one on which he had writ that he had not had the courage to destroy it—he believed it would make his name live, though his body had been killed by hunger. But I burnt it in my stove as soon as I could: how could I tell it was not what would get me into trouble with the police?"

She shut her lattice sharply, unwilling to squander more time and more words on such poor things as a mongrel dog and a dead poet. Tricotrin again went on his way with the little shivering beast in the folds of his loose fur coat. It had ceased to moan, and was trying to lick his hand.

"So!" he murmured, half aloud. "The creature that thrusts the boy-poet's trust into her stove for fuel is called the immortal being, and you, who have a tenderer memory and a loyaler love than one woman in ten thousand, get

kicked aside as a cur! How enormous is the vanity of humanity! The river or the dissecting knife—that is the only choice they give you. Little fool! you elected to love a man who had only intelligence, no gold; you elected to serve a life that had only high hopes, no practical pelf; you fastened your heart on a creature who knew the world so little that he fancied the legacy of a dream would be treasured like the legacy of a fortune: few women are so unwise as you were, my dog. And now, because you are a mongrel you are beaten; because you are faithful you are cursed; because you are only a thin, rough, ugly, hapless morsel, with a noble heart beating in your little hairy breast, and an immeasurable love consuming you, you are to be flung into the water with a stone round your neck, or quiver, and thrill, and gasp in torture, under the brutality men call Science! What magnificent justice we have! What appreciation of fidelity! Well—you shall come and have a share with Mistigri: and by-and-by when the chill of the winter has passed, you shall go into the green country places, and live on a Normandy farm that I know of, and blink your eyes all day in the sun, and roll in the long sweet grass, and sleep under the apple-tree boughs. If your master was really a poet, it must have been an added pain to him to think that he left you alone. Had he the divine afflatus, really, in him? Surely not, or he had never left a little desolate thing like you to starve and to pine in the streets And yet—I do not know—poets are but men, men a little nearer to God and the Truth than are others; and when hunger is keen, and the world is cruel, the truth gets obscured to their sight, and they say that God is dead also—since he will not hear or give answer!"

The little dog nestled closer, comforted; and Tricotrin passed on through the network of the streets.

Ere long he drew near one which, in the late night, was still partially filled with vehicles and with foot-passengers, hurrying through the now fast-falling snow, and over the slippery icy pavements. In one spot a crowd had gathered; of artisans, women, soldiers, and idlers, under the light of a gas-lamp. In the midst of the throng some gendarmes had seized a young girl, accused by one

of the by-standers of having stolen a broad silver piece from his pocket.

She offered no resistance; she stood like a stricken thing, speechless and motionless, as the men roughly laid hands on her.

Tricotrin crossed over the road, and with difficulty made his way into the throng of blouses and looked at her. Degraded she was; but scarcely above a child's years; and her features had a look as if innocence were in some sort still there, and sin still loathed in her soul. As he drew near he heard her mutter,—

"Mother, mother! She will die of hunger!—it was for her, only for her!"

He stooped in the snow, and letting fall, unperceived, a five-frank piece, picked it up again.

"Here is some silver," he said, turning to the infuriated owner, a lemonade seller, who could ill afford to lose it now that it was winter, and people were too cold for lemonade, and who seized it with rapturous delight.

"That is it, monsieur, that is it. Holy Jesus! how can I thank you? Ah, if I had convicted the poor creature—and all in error!—I should never have forgiven myself! Messieurs les gendarmes, let her go! It was my mistake. My silver piece was in the snow!"

The gendarmes reluctantly let quit their prey: they muttered, they hesitated, they gripped her arms tighter, and murmured of the prison-cell.

"Let her go," said Tricotrin, quietly: and in a little while they did so,—the girl stood bareheaded and motionless in the snow, like a frost-bound creature.

Soon the crowd dispersed: nothing can be still long in Paris, and since there had been no theft there was no interest: they were soon left almost alone, none were within hearing.

Then he stooped to her: she had never taken off him the wild, senseless, incredulous gaze of her great eyes.

"Were you guilty?" he asked her.

She caught his hands, she tried to bless him and to thank him, and broke down in hysterical sobs.

"I took it—yes! What would you have? I took it for my mother. She is old, and blind, and without food.

It is for her that I came on the streets: but she does not know, it would kill her to know; she thinks my money honest; and she is so proud and glad with it! That was the first thing I *stole!* Oh God! are you an angel? If they had put me in prison my mother would have starved!"

He looked on her gently, and with a pity that fell upon her heart like balm.

"I saw it was your first theft. Hardened robbers do not wear your stricken face," he said softly, as he slipped two coins into her hand. "Ah, child! let your mother die rather than allow her to eat the bread of your dishonor: which choice between the twain do you not think a mother would make? And know your trade she must, soon or late. Sin no more, were it only for that love you bear her."

Then he passed from her swiftly, chanting still the burden of the roses.

The girl-criminal, the child-courtesan of sixteen summers, stood mute and paralyzed; her hand mechanically closing on the gold; her large dark heavy eyes gazed over the white stretches of the snow, and up at the black star-studded skies: hot tears rushed under her swollen lids, and she flung up her arms to the heavens with a sob that was prayer and oath in one.

He had ransomed her from more than the prison cell: he had bought her soul from sin.

And the joyous amorous song rang gayly through the night; for these were daily things that he did, and were nothing new in his life, which, if like the life of Desaugiers it was one perpetual fête, was also one continual benediction. Turn by turn, his life had been full of mirth, and passion, and poetry, and revelry, and pain, and all the delights of the senses and the soul in changeful sequence; but in it one thing reigned ever, never sleeping, never shadowed, never silent, never cold, a thing of which men have little, and saints have less,—charity.

By-and-by, through the streets of the old city and across the river, he came to where the great front of the Tuileries glittered all alive with light.

"Ah! I remember they are dancing here too," he

murmured, as he glanced at the illumined palace. "So there is the eldest son of the church spending half a million to entertain the princes of the earth, while out in the street yonder filial piety must turn harlot to get a crust! Sublime crown of civilization!"

And he walked through the Carousel to the Court of Honor.

"No one passes," said one of the Cent Gardes, bringing his bayonet level, while his sky-blue and silver harness glittered in the gaslight.

"Bah! I pass; you know me, Petit Jean."

The guard looked, smiled, and let him enter. He knew that Tricotrin was privileged, by right of that love which the people openly bore him, and the fear which their rulers secretly felt of him.

He stood in the entrance among the fretting horses, shouting lackeys, flaring torches: they filled the vast court with movement and with color, while above-head the heavy snow whitened the roofs of palace, pavilion, and gallery.

The guests of the court were then leaving in the gray of night that met morning: hundreds passed by him, women of beauty and birth, and men of every nation's nobility, the brilliant throng of a new-year ball, passing out to their equipages in the red tossing flamelight of ten thousand torches.

Among them came one whose loveliness had had no peer even among all that was loveliest in Europe:—a woman of a perfect beauty, moving with slow sweeping step; a woman of lofty slender stature like a palm; of voluptuous and exquisite grace; with eyes dark as night, full of languor and luster, and a skin like the snow, and hair of lightest gold, in which stars of diamonds shone; a woman with the dignity of an empress, the glance of a sorceress, the face of an angel.

And the running footmen, with their torches blazing, cleared a wide way before her, and called aloud for the carriage of,—"Madame la Duchesse de Lirà."

He, standing there beyond the torch-glare, started and went forward, the blood flushing his forehead, his eyes lighting to eager passion.

Once this beautiful sovereign had said, "If I forget you then may God forget me;"—now her careless imperial glance sweeping over the throng passed over him and did not even see him.

His head dropped as if he had been struck a sharp blow; a keen anguish, like the anguish in the bold faithful eyes of a hound wounded by the hand that it loves, came into his: not without need and prescience had he once answered her,—"thy sins to me I shall forgive thee: for what else have I given thee love?"

The carriage rolled away with noise and royal ceremony; bearing her from the scene of her victories; and he went slowly forth back over the river into the haunts of the old city with the stray dog in his bosom.

With the riches of his genius had he made the hearts of the poor and heavy-laden to rejoice that night in innocent and natural delight: with the stripes of human ingratitude and oblivion was he scourged that night himself.

"What matter? what matter?" he murmured, as he went through the driving sheets of snow. "What matter?—she is happy."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

In the little kitchen of the river-house in the vine country an old woman sat beside her fire.

Her home had everything that her hardy habits stood in need of; there was abundance of wood in the log closet, there was abundance of brown sweet loaves in the bread-pot, there was ample winter provision in the red earthen pans and the shining brass dishes; there was a bright and pleasant comfort in the fire-glow, in the scent of the herbs, in the purr of the cat; and a sturdy, bright-visaged peasant girl of sixteen, a grand-niece of her own from a distant province, never left her day or night. Yet in the

worn, brave, patient, sunburnt face, so old, so still, so dark, there was an abiding, unutterable grief,—a grief that never spoke.

In the long summer days she would creep slowly into the porch, under the great flowering boughs of the chestnuts, and stand for hours shading her eyes with her hand, and looking out to where the distant road ran through the vine-fields,—the road that led to the great world.

In the long winter nights she would move toward the window, and draw aside its little red curtain, and sit for hours looking out to where the swollen river roared between its banks,—the river that swept westward to the sea.

Summer and winter she watched for that which never came: the earth holds no greater agony.

At times she would go up the stairway to a great, heavy walnut-press, full of curious doors and dim recesses, and unlock these, and draw them forth, and gaze at their contents;—linen and woolen stuffs, and furs, and many different heaps of gold: she never touched them, but she would gaze at them very long. And at other times she would sit under the chestnuts, or over the warm hearth, as the seasons of the year went by, with only that mute and hopeless pain upon her face, saying nothing, but only stroking the white head of the great cat, Bebée.

She knit, and spun, and eat, and drank, and sliced the onions, and washed the lettuces, and dried the thyme, and worked on, and served herself with industrious travail, as all the temper and the teachings of her life had made her do, while there was one lingering pulse of strength in her aged limbs. But she scarcely ever spoke; and the look in her eyes never changed.

It was only when she sank to sleep in the warmth of the sun, or the heat of the fire, that in her dreams words stole brokenly through the lips, whose sternness relaxed, and whose silence was broken. And the little Lorraine peasant maiden, bending over her, with pity, and with wonder, found those dream-murmured words to be ever the same:

"They never come back! They never come back!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"I HAVE not sold one!" said a little Italian lad, with his soft brown eyes brimming over with tears: he was a half-starved delicate child of some ten or twelve years, with a tray of white images.

He was one out of the many thousands, bartered for a few coins, from their homes on the slopes of the Abruzzi or Apennines. A miserable home, sheds shared with the goat and the ass, with dried forest-leaves for a bed, and a piece of sheepskin for a garment, and a draught of sour milk for a meal: but which yet looked so happy and so fair with its sweet-smelling mountain air, and its long summer days, with the herds at pasture, and its play at eventime under the broad cork-tree, and its deep still hush of solitude, with the spring-loosened snows stealing down through the silence,—when the child had been torn from them all forever, and carried northward and westward, to suffer the anguish of cities, the desolation of the streets, the famine of home-sickness amid alien crowds.

He had not sold one: standing there all the day through in the gay, changing, thoughtless throngs of Paris. And he knew that if he went back to his taskmaster without a coin for all his wasted day, the blows would rain down on him like hail, and he would be flung into the noisome, pestilential darkness of the cellar that he lived in, without even the mouldy crust of bread that was by right his supper. Worse things even than this were done to him,—a young child in a strange land, with the seeds of mortal disease in him, sure to die and tell no tale: and he wept bitterly in the springtide sunshine that quivered through a million leaves in a million threads of glory on his head.

He had sold nothing, eaten nothing, not drunk even a drop of water since the sweet balmy April day had commenced; and on an organ near they had played an old Lombardic tune that his mother had used to sing to him

in the little cabin under the rock, while the evening mists grew white and hid the valley below. And the air had made the tears start in his eyes, and the great sobs rise in his chest: that time seemed so long—ah, God!—so long ago! For a childhood that is unhappy is as a martyrdom without an end.

"I have not sold one!" he cried to the only living creature who that day paused beside him, to ask why a little, pale, thin, wretched child was in sorrow in a foreign city.

"Ah! You grieve because the world will have none of your toys?" cried his questioner. "Well,—that is the grievance of all of us. The woman will not have our love,—the public will not have our science,—the galleries will not hold our art,—the nation will not accept our policies,—one way or another everybody chafes because every one else will not take to his playthings. And the successful man is the man who knows how to turn his toys to the tastes of the moment."

The boy looked up, shrinking from the jest that seemed to him so untimely and so unmerciful; but as he met the eyes bent on him, he took hope from their sunny compassion. There was no pity in the words, but there was infinite pity in the look; and children and dogs regard the glance far more than the speech.

"I have sold nothing!" he repeated once more, wistfully, with the sobs stifled in his throat. "And you do not know what the Patron is when one goes back without money!"

"He beats you—eh?"

"Ah!"—the child gave a great shudder, a shudder of remembrance and foreboding intermingled.

"Of course he does. He sees the world thrash all who have not the knack of getting gold in it. He only follows the fashion. He would not beat you if you stole?—to be sure not; he follows the fashion there too. But you do not steal?"

"No! I am afraid."

"Well,—not a noble motive for abstinence, but a wholesome one in the absence of a sturdier. Retain it. And you have not taken a sou all this day through?"

"*Not* one!" sobbed the child, in a loud wail of terrified

misery. "Not one! and he will thrash me till I cannot stand."

"Most men are in your predicament, save a few happy hawkers who know well how to trim their wares, and a few wise men like myself, who, having nothing to buy or to sell, contrive to live at our ease. Well, if I had the money to purchase your trayful, you should have it; since I have not, let me see if I can get rid of some of that trumpery for you."

Before the astonished and sobbing child had recovered his amaze at an address that rang on his ear as so wantonly cruel, his companion had caught up the board full of white images, sprang on a bench under one of the linden-trees of the boulevard, and, raised thus above the passing populace, arrested its attention by his attitude and his challenge.

"Stop! all you who are useless drones in the city!" he cried aloud. "The industrious men may be off, they will not diminish the crowd very much!"

By one accord all the throng paused under the limes, careless how their stoppage incriminated themselves into his first category.

"Listen!" cried several voices. "That is Tricotrin there—ah! he is better than the theaters any day!"

And they gathered nearer about the lime trunk, curious to know what he could be doing there, with his board of plaster casts held in air, and his eyes laughing down on their upturned faces. They were used to him in many phases: from a Harlequin dancing at their barrière balls to a Gracchus leading them in years that were red with revolution.

Whether he danced with them, fought with them, laughed with them, or suffered with them, he was still their own—Tricotrin.

Rapidly one and another joined the first speaker, and the group grew, and grew, with the marvelous celerity of a city throng, and loitered about the linden-tree that sheltered the bench where their favorite stood,—the board of plaster toys resting on his left arm, and the broad blossoming boughs flinging their shadows upon him.

"Ah, my people of Paris!" he cried to them. "Look

at these things,—the little lad who owns them has not been able to sell one of them among you. How is that? You are not commonly loth to buy new toys; no nation spends its money sooner or wider upon playthings. The world knows that. Why,—we are the great toy-shop of Europe.

"These are brittle, you say? Well, there is no gainsaying it. And they soil with a touch! I admit it. And they are hollow within, only masks at the best?—there is no question but that is true too. I grant every one of your objections. But are they anything new against playthings? I guess not.

"Look at your pet toy 'prestige.' Is not that brittle enough? What a glittering, inflated, gold-bedizened, empty-stomached bladder, that a single blow from the cudgel of adversity breaks and shrivels into naught! Can you eat such a bladder, can you drink from it, can you feed hungry mouths on it, can you take voyages in it, can you trust it to be as sound and as solid as a nugget of ore, or as a loaf of brown bread?—of course not. Yet nine times out of ten you spend all your wealth on it, and you are so busy blowing with all your breath into it to send it higher, that you never notice the grave being dug at your feet, and your children being sucked down into it. Then how in justice can you urge that you will not purchase this plaster bust of Homer, because a crack will make it worthless?

"But they soil so soon, you say;—what is the thing you love best to play with at your leisure, whether you be a noble drinking his wines, or a cobbler stitching his leather, a duke yawning in a palace, or a lemonade seller lying in the sun? Why—a woman's name, I fancy. How you toss it up like a ball in the smoke-clouds of slander: how you pull the dainty down off it, as off a butterfly's wings; how you fling it from one to another, careless of everything except how you get your sport out of it! Well, I warrant you that not one of these little white vases, not one of these little white statues, can be smirched one-half so swiftly as can a woman's fair fame. And off these you can scrape the soil; but off that you can never again remove the stain you once have made on it.

"But they are hollow inside, you still urge?—fie, for shame! What a plea that is! Have you the face to make it? If you have, let me bargain with you.

"When all the love that is fair and false goes begging for believers, and all the passion that is a sham fails to find one fool to buy it:—when all the priests and politicians clap in vain together the brazen cymbals of their tongues, because their listeners will not hearken to brass clangor, nor accept it for the music of the spheres:—when all the creeds, that feast and fatten upon the cowardice and selfishness of men, are driven out of hearth and home, and mart and temple, as impostors that put on the white beard of reverence and righteousness to pass current a cheater's coin:—when all the kings that promise peace while they swell their armories and armies; when all the statesmen that chatter of the people's weal as they steal up to the locked casket where coronets are kept; when all the men who talk of 'glory,' and prate of an 'idea' that they may stretch their nations' boundary, and filch their neighbors' province,—when all these are no longer in the land, and no more looked on with favor, then I will believe your cry that you hate the toys which are hollow.

"Empty indeed these are,—these little heads of Cupid and little groups of the Madonna,—but empty as they may be, they cannot be so hollow as those things that I have quoted, that you cherish, and adore, and purchase, and have faith in! Brittle, quick to soil, and a mere shell, with nothing in it! Why, my plaster cast has copied most exactly all your toys of love and ambition! Come buy them, then! No excuse is left you. I have broken your excuses one by one, like the fagots in the fable!"

"We will buy them, Tricotrin! We will buy them at your own price!" cried twenty voices from the laughing throng below him.

He knew well how to deal with them, with that Paris crowd, so quickly moved to raillery, to wrong, to tears, to sympathy, to rage, with swifter mutations than any other crowds ever know.

"We will buy them! Throw them down to us!" they shouted, thronging closer about the lime-tree, and look-

ing upward to his face on which the mellow sunset glow was falling.

He held up his hand with a gesture to them to pause an instant; and the ironic gay scorn in his eyes softened and a graver tenderness of regard shone on them.

"Wait an instant: not for my sake. For the sake of a better thing—humanity. See here,—this is one of the shameful scandals of our cities. A child torn from his home, divorced from honest labor, set to a pretended trade, that by it he may cloak theft; spoiled for an honest citizen, that he may pander to the greed of an overseer too idle to labor for himself. If it be thus with the green wood, what will it be with the dry? If it be thus that the young children are reared, of what sort will their futures be? Ah—we enlarge the prisons, and we multiply the law courts, and we leave the school and the cradle to chance! We let the spawning beds multiply their poison; and we wonder that devil-fish are all that swarm in our seas! This boy is innocent—as yet. But the choice is given him betwixt blows and theft, starvation and dishonesty. Who shall look for moral courage in a child to enable him to withstand where men succumb? Buy these toys at their own fair prices. You will do a good deed. But do it for the sake of the young thing that is in need and in hunger,—not for mine."

Their answer was a shower of silver on the bench where he stood, and twoscore hands were eagerly outstretched to seize and share the little casts and busts.

He parceled them out among the throng, and took the coins from each, that from each was due, for the plaster thing that had been given in exchange for it. The surplus he forced back upon the buyers.

"No," he said, as they pressed it upon him. "Give him his proper wage,—no alms. I asked for a kindly act, and you have done it. We will not teach him to look on sympathy as a mere goose with golden eggs, or he may one day kill the bird that now has saved him."

Then, as rapidly as he had mounted the seat under the lime, he sprang down from it, thrust the money in the image boy's hand, and was lost to sight within the doors of the wine-shop close behind his lime-tree.

The throng broke up. The people went on their ways; those who had obtained one of the white images, holding it tenderly as a precious relic. One very old woman from the seaboard of the west, fondled with rapt adoration a little plaster medallion of which the value was, at uttermost, two copper pieces.

"I will put it over my bed," she muttered. "It will keep disease away."

She was close beside the door of a carriage as she spoke; a carriage that had been checked by the throng at but little distance from the linden-tree; its occupant heard her and leaned forward.

"I will buy that medal from you,—here is a gold piece."

The old Vendéan, stupid and purblind, stared up with dazzled eyes. She had all the avarice of the French peasant strong in her; she was but a rag-picker groveling in perpetual filth; she lived miserably that she might have the miser's delight of hoarding a few silver pieces in an old earthen pot under the bricks of her stove. She had never owned so much as a broad golden piece all at once in her life; but she hugged her medallion closer, and shook her head in sturdy denial.

"I will not sell it,—no!"

"And why?"

The question was imperious and impatient, asked by one who was little used to brook or hear refusals.

"Because it came from Tricotrin," muttered the toothless, withered, palsied crone, as she tottered on her way through the crowd.

She did not ask or heed who had spoken to her; she hated all those who drove in chariots. It had been just such a carriage as this, rolling rapidly to a king's festival, that had passed over the fair, slender body of the daughter of her youth, and crushed to pulp the delicate brown limbs,—and left her in her old age no better love than the earthen pipkin under the stove-bricks.

The great lady who had proffered her the gold for her plaster bas-relief, drove onward with a pang at her heart.

'An old creature, that gleans her food from the gutters of the streets, is truer to him than I have been!" she thought.

CHAPTER XXXV.

In a great palace of Rome a man lay sick unto death.

Unto death!—though none were suffered to know it save himself, though he made no moan at any one of the inward tortures that consumed him, though he reclined by his lofty casement watching the rising of the moon, in what his household deemed the mere lassitude of long weakness.

He knew that he must die; whether in this night, or not for another year, he could not tell, nor science tell for him; but he knew that his doom was certain—as certain as that the moonlight was streaming, white and limpid and clear as morning, through his vast, painted, silent chamber. But it was his own secret, and he had kept it. He meant thus to keep it until such time as the dumbness and grayness of dissolution should disclose it for him.

He was oftentimes racked with torment. The disease that had fastened on him is ever merciless, sparing not prince nor peasant; a vampire which, when once it has made fast its fangs, never leaves hold till its prey is slain. But he never suffered a complaint or a lament to escape from him. He was of delicate frame, of fragile strength; he had long been a scholar, an invalid, a recluse; none deemed it more than some slight increase of feebleness that bound him to his couch.

Into the mournful shadowy hues of his chamber, where, by his will, only the moonbeams shed radiance, there came a sudden golden blaze of light, a sudden odorous waft of perfume, a sudden flash of glorious beauty, that came out from the gloom as the sun from a cloud.

These came with the entrance of a woman, behind whom two little pages bore two silver branches of wax-lights.

She swept over the room as a swan sweeps over the

water, and came to him, noiselessly, save for the soft shiver of her silken robes. She was beautiful, exceedingly; and on her face shone all the victory and proud security of a supreme power. As she moved, her diamonds gleamed on her breast and in her hair and in the folds of her skirts; she was attired for a costume-ball at the Palace of the Doria, and had robed herself as Marie Antoinette de France, diademed and ermined in the full ceremonial of royalty.

She came to him and laid her white hand on his.

"I trust you are better this evening?"

His eyes dwelt on her with an unutterable adoration.

"I believe so," he answered simply. "I think I shall soon suffer nothing."

Some accents in his voice attracted her; she regarded him more earnestly.

"You do suffer, I fear?" she asked.

"A little—perhaps. In not being able to go with you, for instance. But I am weak, that is all."

There are lies nobler than truth.

"How magnificent you look to-night, my empress!" he continued, while his large, dark eyes gazed on her with rapt worship. "You grow more beautiful every hour! But why have you taken that part for yourself? A discrowned queen has nothing in common with *you!*"

She laughed slightly, glancing at her own splendid vision in the opposite mirrored wall.

"No, indeed! But I am Marie Antoinette in her omnipotence, in her glory. Nay! I am more than she. I am France personified! My costume is perfect?"

"You are perfect—yes."

He deemed her so: this exquisite thing, whom he called wife, and in whose heart there was no throb for him, but only one passionate, all-absorbing love for his great rival of the world.

"You see this diamond arrived in time?" she continued, touching the center stone of her necklace of unusual size and brilliancy. "I was so afraid it might be retarded on its way through the east, though a courier traveled night and day with it."

He smiled indulgently—as to a spoiled child.

"I bade them get it here, if any way possible, by this evening. You have now the largest jewel out of the European regalias. Those trifles are a woman's pride, I know."

A spasm, whose suffering he could not entirely conceal with all his fortitude, changed his color and caught his breath a moment as he spoke. She looked at him quickly.

"I am afraid you are more ill than usual? Had I not better stay with you?"

There were compassion and the desire to testify it in the offer; but he knew well that it was the accent of duty, not of affection, that spoke in it. He strove to smile again as he replied to it.

"Stay!—and leave the Dorian ball? Stay!—and sacrifice that superb costume for which your diamond has traveled, expressly, the whole way from Benares? Nay—I am not so selfish, my beautiful one. You are not made to be chained down to a sick couch in all your youth and all your loveliness"

"It is I who am selfish—not you," she said, hurriedly, in a momentary pang of conscience and of self-accusation.

"Selfish? Oh, no,—wait until I reproach you, to reproach yourself. Is it not one of the few pleasures that my life has known to be certain that you are happy? Go—you are late as it is; and make the world say once more, what it has so often said already, that all its kingdoms do not hold a creature so victorious and so beautiful as my wife!"

She smiled; her life was so steeped in flattery, that it seemed only the daily utterance of what was her natural due. She was rejoiced to go; she had felt fearful lest he might accept the offer that her duty had wrung from her. She stooped, and lightly touched his forehead with her lips, and turned with her soft, languid grace from his couch.

"You are right; it is late," she said, as she glanced at a timepiece, and floated away through the length of the chamber, the lights which her pages bore falling on the flashing jewels of the royal dress of France.

The world waited for her, the world and all its homage. And—for the husband whom she left there,—had he not

his reward? Would not every man whose sight beheld her beauty to-night, envy his possession of herself?

It was enough; she had repaid him.

His eyes followed her with a terrible yearning love that hungered for one backward glance, one farewell word; —none came, she passed out without one lingering look, one last good-night. She was thinking of the world that waited for her in the Palace of the Dorias.

The lights passed away, the curtain fell behind them, the trailing of her train upon the marble floor ceased to break the silence. He was left alone. And he covered his face with his hands, and shuddered as with cold, the dews of anguish standing on the brow that her lips had brushed as lightly and as carelessly as the wings of a butterfly brush the face of a corpse. He would have borne the throes of ten thousand deaths to spare her one throb of pain,—and he was no more to her than the glittering stones that shone on her fair bosom; nay, not one tithe so much! Honor, affluence, gladness, luxurious ease, imperial pomp, and all the homage that the world will only render to those who can command it, had come through his hand to her. Through him she was throned on high, where perpetual summer and everlasting sunlight were her portion, where the storm of calamity, and the chill of poverty, and the scorch of shame never more could touch her. Through him, the desire of her soul was given unto her; and the crown of greatness was set on her proud brows in lieu of the brand of bastardy, and of the thorn-wreaths of vain ambition, and of disappointed effort. Through him all things that she had craved had become hers without price or penalty. And his reward was that men grudgingly counted the years of his life that were set as a barrier betwixt them and her loveliness! And that to this exquisite thing,—cruel without intent and unwitting of the pain that fed her pleasure, as infants when they catch at butterflies,—he was only as the treasury from which the gold that was needed for her triumphs came, as the mine whence the jewels of her regalia were drawn, as the magician whose wand summoned around her the splendors of an enchanted world.

He lavished all that the earth held upon his idol. And

she—she was not so much moved by all his priceless gifts as in the days of her childhood she had been moved by a single branch of dog-roses, a single horn of silvered sweetmeats, from another's hand.

She was radiant, thoughtless, mutable, capricious, surrendered to the indulgence of every whim, and forgetful of the hand from which the power of such indulgence came,—it is ever on natures such as this that love is poured out most abundantly; natures that rejoice in its effect, but no more heed its root than the bee heeds the roots of the flower-bell that it despoils of its honey.

In her heart he knew not one pulse beat for him.

In her absence he knew not one thought turned to him.

In her future he knew not one memory would be faithful to him.

And this bitterness was greater to him than all the bitterness of death.

For he suffered also that jealousy which, arising in noble natures, will never stoop to suspicion, but yet it is the inevitable offspring of that possession of a beloved life, which is not also possession of the soul within that life.

He did not fear the safety of his honor. She was proud, she was truthful, she was of high courage; such women do not carry shame to their husbands' hearths. But—she was so young, she was so beautiful, she was so hourly besieged by all the honeyed eloquence of passion, and he—he was left here, old ere his time, powerless to attract or enchain her, gray, weary, hopeless, paralyzed with a piteous disease. When he bade her go forth into the world where her lovers wooed her ear, and every whisper that stirred the air was a whisper to forget himself, he reached that martyrdom of the soul of which the world knows naught, but which surpasses in its fortitude and in its torture every martyrdom of the body.

The night was very still; through the lofty casements the lustrous Roman moon shone white; the great chamber was hushed like a grave. He lay there long with his face hidden, and no sign of life within him, save now and then a quiver of his limbs as the canker of death within him dealt him some sharper blow.

A dreamy sense of exhaustion and of peace slowly

stole on him, stilling his suffering, but stilling with it the life in his veins. His attendants, alarmed at his long silence, drew noiselessly near, and fearing to disturb what might be merely peaceful sleep, stood inactive round his couch. His physicians, hastily summoned, saw that it was sleep indeed, the sleep that knows no awakening. They raised him, and his eyes unclosed with the old, gentle smile they knew so well.

"This is death?" he asked.

"Seek the duchess—quick!" they whispered low; but not so low that the words failed to catch the ear of the dying man.

"No, no!" he murmured. "Tell her nothing. It would spoil her pleasure!"

And his last breath faded from his lips in that last thought for her.

He lay dead in the moonlight that streamed about him—fair, cold, pitiless, radiant as the life that he had cherished.

In Rome, on the morrow, men, speaking together of the last of the once-famous Dukes of Lirà, said that he had made no mark upon the world save by his strange marriage with his beautiful wife; and laid many wagers as to who in Europe would be likeliest to marry his fair duchess.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE noon sun shone on some few breadths of corn-land lying on a southern hillside above a winding road, where one little white, brown-roofed châlet alone stood looking down into the small, cool, dark-blue lake that slept below.

The corn was brown and ripe; the circle of the seasons had brought the harvest time again; the wheat was full in ear; and, with the yellow riches of the neighboring gourds and the fruit of some goodly olive-trees hard by, would give wealth enough for a peasant of the Pyrenees

to be well content withal. Yet the owner of the nook of arable land upon the chestnut-clothed slope was weeping piteously, like Rachel refusing to be comforted, like Rachel having lost her son into the twilight of an unknown fate.

It was the grief of grand'mère for Antoine; it was the grief of a million mothers when the sickle of State-Lust gathers in the budding corn of the young lives they love; it was the grief of which Theroigne de Mericourt was ignorant when in answer to the reproach—"Why will ye women breed in servitude, why are ye not as the desert beasts, that losing liberty are fruitless?"—she replied, "Did not the child smile in his mother's face for all that Nero or Tiberius reigned?"

Under Tyrannies the children may smile, because they know not what Birth has brought them; but under Tyrannies the mothers weep. And in revolution the reddest hand, the voice most shrill and pitiless, are the hand and voice of a woman.

This woman, old and feeble, lamented for the son of her elder years whom the conscription had taken—taken from his peaceful mountain home, and his pastoral games, and his corn raised with so much labor on the arid soil just as its harvest crowned his toil.

She stood on the stone sill of her little dwelling, and beside her stood a man in the loose linen shirt of the people, with a violin under his arm and a little black monkey playing at his feet.

"It is the conscription!" she cried, wringing her hands —slender hands, for she had been city born, and could not aid herself as could the sturdy women of the southern land. "The conscription! See how the government devours us. All the youngest, and bravest, and best, drawn away to rot in the battle-fields!"

"Chut! good friend," said her companion's mellow voice, that was in itself a sound of consolation. "Blame not the government. Blame the war-lusts of men's souls. Look you,—if the people governed, I doubt not but they would be as cruel. A republic and peace we say—ay, we shall get them, perchance, in paradise. Not here. The people everywhere are hot and hasty and blind in

judgment; they would rush into wars the instant that their jealousy or their vanity smarted. And then the youths would go to the slaughter. See how it was with them in the days of Argonne and Jemappes."

"That may be," moaned the bereaved mother. "But they would not take the lad from the plow, the boy from earning his grandam's bread, the child with the down on his cheek from the herd of goats that was all his store. They would have pity——"

"On their own class? Possibly. They would stay at home themselves, and send the poet, the scholar, the artist, the statesman, out to the storms of the grape-shot? Oh, yes! But would that come nearer justice, my friend?"

"I do not know!" sobbed the woman, inconsolable. "I only know Bernal is gone!"

"Ah!" murmured Tricotrin. "That is all most of you know of justice,—how she looks through your own little eyelet-hole! Listen here, Aimée Herbalez, we all have our burdens; but it depends on ourselves how long we carry them. The conscription is hard, that I grant you; and were the bodies of men well trained to arms, and their minds to tolerance, there need be no conscription, because there would be no war. But while the world wags as it does, men must be patriots, and every patriot must be a soldier if necessity arise. And Bernal was a lad of spirit; he would not have been easy in your little nook all his days. Who knows?—he may carry the Bâton in his knapsack? There was a rough peasant boy once, down in the south, in whose fate it was written to sit on the throne of the great Gustavus,—and his race reigns to-day. Who can tell what Bernal may not reach?"

"He would be as far from me if he were a king!" murmured the despairing Herbalez. "It is good of you to talk so, and it is true that the boy was well pleased to go into the army, promising to get covered all over with orders. But, ah!—they talk of the stars and the crosses, and they die in a ditch!"

"Supreme truth! Thousands rot at an Austerlitz, and one man goes home a conqueror. If I kill a single

creature for a bag of gold coins, I am guillotined as a murderer; if I kill a million creatures for a diadem of gold, I am worshiped as a hero. Singular arithmetic and ethics! But hark you——"

"They die in a ditch!" wailed the woman. "My bright innocent boy!—he is gone into the hell of Paris, where he will forget his God and me; and they will draught him out to that hideous Cayenne, where they say no strong man can breathe and live."

"What regiment have they drafted him into?"

She told him between her sobs.

"All right! Only the second battalion will go to Cayenne. I know something of that regiment's commanders,—for that matter I did them a turn one night down an African defile, when it went hard with them against a band of plunderers. I will see what I can do to get Bernal left with the first battalion at Toulouse. Toulouse is not so far but you can look at him now and then. So take heart! The boy shall come back here with his lieutenancy if we can get him one; and—meantime, your corn is spoiling!"

"What matter the corn!" she cried, impetuously. "What matter the corn, if you can save my boy? God reward you! You are ever like sunshine in a desolate place. You are ever full of generous thoughts!"

"Chut! In my own life I suck the sweetness from my cocoanuts, and only eat the flesh of my dates, like the wise Arabian lad; but when I see my fellow-creatures persistently eating their cocoa-husks and their date-stones, and getting no other nourishment, I do my best to set them right. And the corn?"

"Ah, it is a terrible thing about the corn," sighed the woman, losing her ideal grief in her practical care, through that necessity which is at once the slave-driver and the solacer of the poor. "Bernal was just going to reap it; and the neighbors in the valley have their own business, and I am a weak, useless thing, and one night's storm would lay it and kill it——"

"Assuredly. I will get it in by sunset."

"You!"

"Well! Why not? Have I not worked in the fields *before* now?"

"But that was in play?"

Though he lived with them and like them, felt with them and like them, there was about him that which the people of every land instinctively obeyed and yielded to as the sovereignty of one above them. Superstition, growing out of reverence and love, gave him many strange attributes and lofty antecedents; and to behold him one day claim the kingship of the world would not have been too great a glory for him in the sight of the peasantry that worshiped him.

"In play? Indeed, no. I worked for a wage. I am indolent enough, good Herbalez, as you know; how many hours I lie in the sun as lazy as a lazzarone! It will do me good to get in your wheat. Corn will talk to us, if we listen, better than most men,—what sermons in the full ripe ears that have sprung out of a seed that had looked dead; what poems in the blue cornflower that grows among the wheat like the poetry that springs through the busy lives of men; what rebukes in the brave, patient lark that builds so boldly, though the reaping-hook may cut her little body in two! Come, give me the sickle, there is no time to lose; by the violet of the skies there is a rainstorm due before to-morrow."

With fervent thanks she gave him the classic tool, and stood awed and wondering as he went to the work. To the literal mind of the woman, which was unpoetic but yet superstitious, it was easier to believe that miracles happened, and that the wheat and the blossoms really had tongues for him, than to follow the fantastic fancy which for him filled them both with meaning.

He was soon in the little field,—belted in by the chestnuts, and sultry with the ardent sun of August,—in a corner of which he put down his knapsack, his blouse, and Mistigri, who being a spoilt little epicurean, sat among the cornstalks, disdainfully biting a wheat ear now and then, and making a grimace at it.

"This is the way, Mistigri," he murmured to his single confidant and companion. "When dark hours are down, work through them. No exorcism charms like labor. Men's souls were never made to dwell in night shadows like the owls. To repine for one's self is something so nar-

row and mean. While one has health, and strength, and sight, and liberty, is it not rank blasphemy to say one has not happiness? Ah, Mistigri, there was a beauty in the Mexican's cultus that is missing from the modern creeds. To toss wine heavenward, with kisses, when the sun rose—that meant Gratitude and Rejoicing. And then Christians went with fire and sword, with the Bible of the Jews and the Inquisition of the Spaniards, to massacre all those bright worshipers by way of teaching them a better religion! Paf! Give me the Pagans!"

Mistigri nodded assent, being a little Pagan herself; and Tricotrin bent himself to his work, the hot sun shining on the brown corn, the yellow-winged orioles flying through the light, the poppies and cornflowers bowing under the sickle, the little bright-eyed mice scampering off, as their nests were laid bare, into the chestnut wood belting the field.

He worked fast and unremittingly; he was glad of the labor. Down below there, far away in the valley, were some delicate spires and mighty towers bowered in wood. They were the spires and towers of the Château de Lirà.

As he worked, four gay equipages, with outriders all aglitter in scarlet and silver, passed at a rapid pace below, along the road winding at the bottom of the slope. He paused to gaze at them, shading his eyes with his hand.

"That is our Châtelaine," said the widow, who had come out to bring him a jug of red wine and a roll of bread. "That is the beautiful creature I told you of—the great duchess."

"Yes;" he answered her simply; and he took up his sickle, and went to work afresh, while the sound of the horses' feet still rang on the rocky road below.

"This is the first summer season she has been here," resumed the woman, sitting down with her knitting on the ledge of the wooden pale. "The duke never came here after his marriage: that took place far away south, out of France. We heard of it, and the people were well pleased; they hoped to have great gayeties at the château once more. But it was not so; they were always in Paris, or in foreign countries: we heard that he died

abroad, and she did not come at all; never until this summer, and now,—now,—she makes up for the long absence! Such extravagance, such pleasures, such hundreds of guests, such a life—such a life! They do nothing but feast themselves like princes, and my boy Bernal is drawn for the wars!"

She dropped twelve stitches in her knitting-work,—like many other democrats who leave long gaps in their own work, because they must stay away from it to rail at an Order.

"She is not generous to those that are poor, then?" he asked, bending still at his work.

Bernal's mother shrugged her shoulders.

"I do not suppose she ever remembers that there is anybody living who has not cakes, and wine, and oil, every day! Generous? What do you call generous, Tricotrin? They roast a hundred fowls, I have heard tell, in her kitchen every day; they drink wine that has real sparks of gold in it; they laugh, and sing, and saunter all their hours away; they sleep in satin sheets—so they say: what good is that to us? If you were to go up and ask, for your very life, you could not see her. I did try, when my boy was taken: well! how was it? A servant spoke to another servant, and that servant sent a page, and the page mocked me, and sent another, and that other went to some great man with a silver chain on him, who rebuked me, and told me I was a rude woman, but I might go to the kitchens and ask for food. Food! they would have given me broken bones when I had lost Bernal to the army! No,—she is a fair thing; she has a face like the sun, but she is cold, she is hard, she has no thought for the people. Tricotrin—if the Revolution came again, I could find it in my heart to see her stripped and scourged, and made to eat the bread of bitterness. Look how she enjoys while we suffer!"

The old rankling jealousy, natural, yet so cruel, that lies at the root of all social antagonism, was acrid and almost savage in the words: he did not answer her, but reaped the corn in silence, while she knitted on, striving to recover her lost stitches; but the gap that had been

made would not close,—in eagerness for a revolution of the future she had spoiled her labor of the hour.

There are many reformers like the Widow Herbalez.

By sunset the little golden store was reaped and set in sheaves,—the graceful sheaves of English form, with withes of wild convolvulus, and scarlet heads of poppy, bound up within the wheat. He was free from his self-imposed duty; he left the great white Pyrenean dog of the place on guard among the little harvest, and went down the hillside, pursued by the blessings and the thanks of the conscript's mother. "Gratitude is a lively sense of favors to come;" and she knew that she must look to him to carry it for grinding to the water-mill in the village down below, where the foaming mountain river grew quieter, and watered peacefully green stretches of meadow-land.

There, in the valley, beneath his feet, not more than a league off, were the towers of the château, and the wide, dark masses of park and forest woodland; with lakes, and islets, and rocks, and streams amid them, and in their front the glorious panorama of the mountains.

From the center tower of the pile was floating the scarlet standard of the Lirà; with the golden hawk, with outstretched wings, of their insignia, glittering in the rays of the setting sun.

He descended the hillside with the lithe swiftness of the mountaineer, and passed through the scattered homesteads of the little hamlet, that were chiefly gathered about the side of the river, and had their white walls hidden under thickets of myrtle and olive.

The day's toil was over: the young men and maidens were playing the rough wrestling games of the district, or dancing the Moresco dances, that still linger there as the sign of the Saracenic days of yore: the old women were sitting spinning, nodding their gray heads together, amid the babble of their grandchildren; they were all very poor; they all led simple, homely, patriarchal lives; but they were happy, their youth had the gay grace, and their old age had the smiling content, that belong to France alone.

He scattered among the children a basketful of cherries

that he had bought on the hillside, of an old woman who was seeing her ruddy store likely to rot away for want of a buyer in that lonely place: then he went from one group to another with cheerful words, as his habitude was, and gathered the wishes and wants of the little community. Both were humble enough:—a goat for the sake of its milk; a hank of flax for the spinning; a purchaser for the overripe melons; a necklace of priest-blessed beads; a smile from the bishop as he passed on his mule through this, his far-distant, and rarely visited flock; an acre more ground to some young lover's small patrimony, so that he could wed where he loved: all these in the little world played the part that crowns, and honors, and riches, and fair fame, and fierce passion played in the great world unknown to them.

One young child, beautiful as some medieval painter's seraph, with that angelic spiritual regard which belongs to southern climes, pouted with a pretty scorn at her playmate's cherries, and came and leaned in grave disdain over her mother's knee.

"Dost thou not care for the fruit, Angelique?" asked the mother, reproachfully, smiling the while at Tricotrin, who stood by.

The child's fair face clouded with petulant disdain.

"No! I want more gold toys, mother!"

"Ah!" said the woman, half smiling still, but sadly. "Thy chain has spoiled all thy pleasures! A week ago, look you, our duchess up yonder saw Angelique as she passed, and laughed and tossed her a gold jewel off her wrist. It just fitted the baby's throat; but it has made her so vain, there is no telling how to please her now."

Angelique lifted proudly her little fair throat with the gold links glittering round it, her eyes shining and rapturous.

"I will not play with *them!*" she said, tossing her head toward her playmates. "They have only strings of yew berries or dried peas!—and she never called them beautiful!"

"Hush, hush! A careless word does mischief," murmured her mother, deprecatingly, to Tricotrin. "To give

it to the child was very good, very generous, but the gifts of the great are——"

"Honey that moulds into poison! Your Angelique was happy in her necklace of yew berries, and now, the lust of gold is grown, and gold does not grow like the yews. She gives much,—your Châtelaine?"

An old woman—very old—lifted blind patient eyes where she sat under the chestnuts.

"She saw me sitting in the sun, in the park, the other day, and she spoke softly to me, and she shook her purse into my lap,—I counted twelve pieces, and Vevette found them every one of gold! She is an angel."

"Caprice!" muttered an old charcoal-burner. "Only a caprice, like the chain to little Ange. Her stewards tax us for every rotten twig of wood, till we can scarce keep body and soul together. She is a tyrant."

"We have only gourds and a stray onion to chew," muttered a herdsman, "and her dogs eat the fat of the land. "She is an aristocrat."

"Her flowers have fires all winter, and we shiver and starve."

"Her life is a fairy tale; how should she know what it is to have only a knob of black bread once in twenty-four hours?"

"She spends all her substance in Paris; and then her foresters grudge us a quail we have killed with a stone!"

"Her outriders lamed Bertrand's child for life, and she was laughing in her carriage,—she never saw, she never heard."

"Her fêtes cost a million francs a night, every night of last week, and they say each tree that was lit up cost as much as would keep a man for a twelvemonth."

"But it was beautiful; we could see the light here!" pleaded a handsome young goatherd. "And she has a face like God's own people!"

"She gave me my chain!" cried little Angelique.

"And my twelve pieces!" muttered the blind woman.

"All that will not put a slice of beef in our pots, with the garlic; nor yet mend Bertrand's boy's broken knee," said the charcoal-burner, gloomily, in summary and conclusion.

Tricotrin, standing under the chestnut, heard in silence; then wished them good-night, and walked on as Mistigri leaped to his shoulder.

"Ah! little one," he murmured to her. "How the hotbed of the world has heated and strengthened the faults and the follies!—yet the higher nature lives still, and the gift goes to the child, the gold pieces to the blind woman. Will it ever wake wholly and reign again? Yes, perhaps:—if ever she love!"

Meanwhile, under the chestnuts, the blithe talk of the aged women grew silent: the little Angelique pouted apart, vexed with herself for having scorned her share of the cherries; the charcoal-burner sat moodily musing of things of the old Revolution of which his grandsire had told him; the young herdsman would not join in the Sarabande, but wandered away thinking of the face "like one of God's people," that belonged to his proud Châtelaine, and gazing wistfully upward at the lights that began to gleam through the wood of the château.

The bright and light-hearted content and communion of their lives had been dimmed and been broken:—the world had sent amid them the visible presence of its devil-empress, wealth.

He, himself, went onward through the valley, through the deep belt of the woods, through the avenues of the park. The whole front of the antique building was lighted, and the painted oriels gleamed ruby, and amber, and soft brown, in the dusky evening, through the green screen of foliage.

The fragrance of the orange alleys, and of the acres of flowers, was heavy on the air; there was the sound of music borne down the low southerly wind; here and there through the boughs was the dainty glisten of gliding silks:—it was such a scene as once belonged to the terraces and gardens of Versailles.

From beyond the myrtle fence and gilded railings which severed the park from the pleasaunce, enough could be seen, enough heard, of the brilliant revelry within to tell of its extravagance, and its elegance, in the radiance that streamed from all the illumined avenues.

He stood and looked long; hearing the faint echo of

the music, seeing the effulgence of the light through the dark myrtle barrier.

A very old crippled peasant, searching in the grass for truffles, with a little dog, stole timidly up and looked too.

"How can it feel, to live like *that*?" he asked, in a wistful tremulous voice.

Tricotrin did not hear: his hand was grasped on one of the gilded rails with a nervous force as from bodily pain.

The old truffle-gatherer, with his little white dog panting at his feet, crossed himself as he peered through the myrtle screen.

"God!" he muttered, "how strange it seems that people are there who never once knew what it was to want bread, and to find it nowhere, though the lands all teemed with harvest! They never feel hungry, or cold, or hot, or tired, or thirsty: they never feel their bones ache, and their throat parch, and their entrails gnaw:—these people ought not to get to heaven, they have it on earth!"

Tricotrin heard at last; he turned his head and looked down on the old man's careworn hollow face.

"'Verily, they have their reward,' you mean? Nay, that is a cruel religion—which would excruciate hereafter those who enjoy now! Judge them not; in their laurel crowns there is full often twisted a serpent. The hunger of the body is bad indeed, but the hunger of the mind is worse perhaps; and from that they suffer, because from every fulfilled desire springs the pain of a fresh satiety."

The truffle-hunter, wise in his peasant-fashion, gazed wistfully up at the face above him, half comprehending the answer.

"It may be so," he murmured. "But then—they *have* enjoyed! Ah, Christ! that is what I envy them. Now we,—we die, starved amid abundance; we see the years go, and the sun never shines once in them; and all we have is a hope—a hope that may be cheated at last. For none have come back from the grave to tell us whether *that* fools us as well."

So saying, he heavily shouldered his creel of truffles, and turned away sadly.

Tricotrin turned also, and laid his hand on the rush basket and swung it over his own back.

"I will carry it home for you," he said to the feeble old cripple. "We will have some more words together: and you shall give me a night's lodging."

"Willingly! But I have only a wattle hut in the forest!——"

"What matter? I can sleep outside it, under the pines. I have done that oftentimes. There is no more fragrant bed-chamber,—not even where great ladies rest."

He glanced back at the distant gardens where the lights, and the music, and the guests of the evening festival were.

"She is happy: what matter that she forgets?" he thought, as he went back with the old woodsman into the shadow of the pine and the chestnut forests.

The little hut stood hidden in one of the deepest recesses of the great sylvan growth which, watered by innumerable subterranean branches of the river, that was fed with every spring-tide by the melted snows of the mountains, resisted the withering scorch of the southern suns. It was a small rough place, bare as a hermit's cell, and strewn with dried water-rushes; truffles were scarce in the district, and for them there were swifter and abler seekers than the cripple of eighty years.

He had been born in the Lirà forests, and had lived in them all his days, first as a charcoal-burner, then, when his strength failed him, and he had broken his knee down a ravine, by seeking for the dainty root that savors the rich man's banquet. Of any world lying beyond them, he had but the vague conception of a child: days and nights, and months and years had all gone by with him under the broad fans of the pines and the chestnuts, the seasons only measured to him by the budding of the rosy leaves and the falling of the golden cones. Yet he was patient, and laborious, and wise in his own way, like one of the gentle beavers that built their wooden cities in the lake beside his home.

"You have always lived alone?" Tricotrin asked him, as he sat at the hut door, smoking, as the moon rose and silvered all the delicate colonnades of the pine stems.

"Not always."

"Not always? How is it then that you are so now?"

"How does it always happen when we outlive those we love? Men are foolish who grow old."

"Rather,—men are foolish who hang on other lives! You had children once?"

The old man came forward into the moonlight, and sat himself down on a broken tree-root; he was very grateful to the stranger who had pitied him, he was glad to break his accustomed loneliness and silence by speech.

"I had one child; and I had a young wife whom I loved well. How many years is it since then? I cannot tell: another life, surely,—it looks so long ago. Madelon lived here,—yes, here. It seems strange to think of now. She was so pretty, and so brown, and so blithe; just like one of the robins. And she was always singing; sometimes I hear her voice among the leaves still. We buried her under that pine,—the one with a cross cut out on the bark,—but I always fancy myself that her soul passed into one of the birds. She was always fond of them; they were always fluttering about her. Is it possible, think you?"

He did not wait for an answer: he did not wish his fancy disturbed.

"Madelon had a little daughter; I did not care so much for her. It seemed cruel that when *she* died that life stolen from hers lived on?—you know what it is that I mean? Well,—the child,—Madelon, too, she was named, —grew up; and I was very gentle with her because she had no mother. They said in the forest here, and up at the château, that she was much lovelier than my Madelon had been: it might be so,—she was not so fair in my sight. The child was always happy, singing, too, making chains of berries and flowers, and looking at her own face as she saw it in the lake water. The great people up at the château—this was forty years ago, and more, what I talk of now, and they were very gay and brilliant there then, just as Miladi is now—took a fancy to her, and she went away with one of the princesses, in her service they told me. I was very loth,—I was all alone,—and I the voice of my Madelon. But she wept, and

fretted, and raved, and said she should die in the forest: what could I do? She was just like a bird in a cage; and if I had kept the cage closed she would have given me no song, and men would have said I was cruel. So she went,—pretty volatile thing. Went where?—that is what I cannot tell. She was as blithe in her flight as any young pigeon. I suppose she was happy. The seasons went by; those chestnuts four times were all pink with their buds; four times the brown fruit dropped out of their pods. I never saw Madelon all that time. Day after day I went to the château; I could hear nothing: she was with the princess, they said. I suppose the world is very large, is it not? By-and-by that great lady came again to stay at the château; I saw her face as she rode past one day. By dint of much prayer and entreaty I got to see her,—it was hard work for weeks to do so,—when I spoke with her she could not understand me; those great people have a different tongue to ours; but she was very gentle, and I could see she grieved for me, and she told me through her servant that she had lost sight of Madelon some years: that the girl had been with her but a brief season, and then had grown bad,—bad,—bad,—and had gone to be a rich, wicked woman, with the gold of the nobles. I do not know what I did, what I said, I have forgotten; it is long ago. But they told me I fell down in some fit; and it is true that after that time I was never strong, and my left arm, I could not lift it again. I never blamed the man that misused Madelon, look you; if a woman-child have no heart and no soul, and longs to be vile because she is dull in her home, why,—she is like the nightshade flower, she will bear poison let you plant her where you will. I never blamed him; but I was glad that her mother was dead. And—do you know one thing?—the birds have never sung blithely since."

"Never to you," Tricotrin answered him softly. "And you have heard no more of her?"

"No more. She never came back. Why should she? I am only an old lame man, and for the birds and the trees and the flowers the girl never cared. She was not like my Madelon, who loved them. Yet I am wrong to

say I never heard again: I did hear once, twenty or more years after. There came a letter to me; I cannot read, I took it to the curé down in the village yonder, not the one that is there now,—the dead one. He read it out to me: it was from a sailor somewhere in what they call the Riviera. It was a simple kindly letter, to tell me that he was going to wed a pretty child; who he thought was my grandchild by what he knew of her mother's history. The letter had been ten months in finding me; it was ill addressed; the priest replied to it for me, but I never heard again. So whether it was true or not I cannot tell."

"Might I see it?"

"Surely. I have kept it by me."

He went into his hut, and after some minutes absence, returned with an old yellow paper.

"Here it is. You can read, I dare say?"

Tricotrin took it; and read: it was barely a decipherable scrawl, very clumsily and laboriously written; pathetic through its gentle and homely simplicity. It set forth in few words that the writer was about to become the husband of an orphan girl who was known to be the bastard-daughter of one of the nobles of France, though brought up among the fishing people; it went on to say that her mother had never been seen on that shore, but, dying lately in Paris, had bequeathed her some jewels, a little gold, the declaration that she was her offspring by a princely lover, and the injunction to endeavor to learn whether an old man of the name of Aubin Ralcor was still living in the forests of Lirà; this was signed Madelon Ralcor, commonly known as Pearl Rosalba, and had been dictated from the dying bed of the testatrix. The sailor also wrote that he would die of starvation ere ever he touched the store of gold and gems; but that he earnestly desired to seek out, and be as a son to the old man Aubin Ralcor, whom he supposed the grandsire of his beloved: he subscribed himself in kindly appearing phrase—Jean Bruno.

The letter fell from Tricotrin's hand upon the mossy ground: he sat in silence, gazing out down the silvered *avenue* of pines: this homely tragedy touched him at

every turn, and moved him with its deep-rooted sadness that had darkened three generations. What cruel play of fate's caprices had thus lodged the peace of these men of simple soul, and honest love, in the hands of these women, whose impulses led them from innocence, whose instincts launched them toward vice:—who saw only a wearisome sameness in the passion that clung to them too fondly; who had no other thought than to cheat it, betray it, forsake it? Born from the simple peasant-girl whose grave was made under the cross-marked pine, they had uprisen, like upas-trees, destroying all who rested near them: the old eternal mystery of guilt begot of innocence, of Commodus begot of Antoninus.

He folded up the page and gave it back to Ralcor. What avail was it to deal him the fresh pain of such a story as the sole one he could tell of Bruno's wife—of Coriolis?

"A well-meant, tender letter," he said. "Did you never hear more from him?"

"Never. The priest answered for me, as I say, for I would willingly have seen Madelon's daughter. But whether he ever had the reply or not I cannot tell. No news came from him. It is best so, perhaps. I would rather be left alone with the forest. It knows me as they never could do."

"And is there nothing you desire then?"

"No. I shall be glad to die, that is all."

"And leave your forest?"

"I shall not leave it. They will bury me there by the pine. It will be the same thing, only quieter. To live hardly is all well enough when one is young;—only a crust—what matter? One has the spring of the deer, the heart of the eagle, the speed of the hound. But when one is old,—it is not worth while. The mill takes so much labor to turn; and so little corn comes from it."

With these words he rose, and bade his stranger friend good-night, and went within, and fell upon his knees before his little wooden crucifix, roughly made from two pine-branches, and prayed with the guileless faith of childhood;—half senseless, half sublime.

Tricotrin remained without, in the bright calm moonlight of the forest aisle.

The belling of the deer sounded down the wind; the soft owls flitted through the dusk, the glow-worms glimmered underneath the moss: and far beyond across the woods in the great château, the light, the laughter, the dance, the song, the love-jest passed the hours away as though there were no such memories as crime, or grief, or shame, on earth.

"She is happy," he said, half aloud, to little Mistigri, as he looked at the far-off towers of the mighty place, and mused at the tragedy hidden beneath the simple and obscure lives which on their surface bore only the rough illiterate homeliness of a sailor's and a woodman's toil. "She is happy; what matter the rest? She would have gone to the evil of these women, Mistigri, if she had stayed with us; not for love of the sin or the shame, but for love of the 'great world' she craved, for escape from the peasant-life she detested: she would have been like Madelon, like Coriolis. True: there is scant worth in an honor only reared into growth under the hothouse shade of fair circumstance. But those frail things of womanhood are no stronger than flowers: they grow straightly, or crookedly, as they blossom in fresh air, or foul; and if we only care for a rose we lead it up to the sunlight, we do not stamp it down into the swamp in its bud. I was a coward, perhaps; I feared that her life should ever reproach me. If we had seen her fallen, wretched, cursing men, and by them cursed, what remorse we should have felt—you and I—Mistigri? And yet——"

And yet?

Were the pomp, and the pride, and the careless glory, and the graceful contempt, of the life that she led, so much nobler after all than the sin of Madelon, than the shame of Coriolis? Was not their root the same passion though their blossom was triumph where the other fruit had been bitterness? The one grew as the palm, whose stately height and lordly crown of greenest leaf towered in perpetual summer, the idol of every passer-by: the other grew as the belladonna, whose purple brilliancy of flower turned into the poison that bore death to all toyers

with it, cursed aloud as men left it on the highway to be trodden down by each strange foot: but they sprang alike from the same soil of ambitious desire, they were alike fanned by the same winds of impatient and feverish longing.

The one carried a green crown of honor; the other but acrid berries of slaughter; yet the sap feeding their veins was the same—it was the passion of the feminine instinct for pleasure, for gain, and for homage.

The passion that has cursed the earth since the primeval age; as the Hebrew poets saw, even in the days of the world's youth, when they created its parallel and parable in the metaphorical poem of Eve, in the allegorical picture of Eden.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

At noon the following day he went up the vast flight of steps that led from the gardens to the doors of the magnificent feudal pile, palace and fortress in one, that crowned the brow of the hill throned amid its darkling pine woods.

"The Duchess de Lirà is within?" he asked of a group of footmen, clad in scarlet and white and gold, lounging inside the courts, that were like the great courts of Versailles.

One of them raised his insolent head with a low laugh.

"The duchess left here early to-day; she is gone to the royal marriage at Madrid."

He turned and passed away down the great marble stairs, without answer.

"What could that fellow want with our lady?" said the footman to his peers. "If she had been here she would never have seen him—a strolling player with a fiddle at his back."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE snow fell once more thickly over the roofs and streets of the City of Paris.

In the little by-lane of the Latin quarter wherein Mère Rose had dwelt, all the quaint angles and gables and jutting angles were white with the fallen flakes; all the leaded dusky panes were glittering yet dim with frost; the empty linnet's cage had icicles around it, in lieu of the lime or the lilac bough that had used to hang above it. Mère Rose was dead; and the linnet was dead also. The casements of the coffee-house were closed against the sharpness of the cold; there were no music in the streets, no laugh on the crisp air, for the populace of this quarter were exceeding poor, and suffered greatly in the wintertime; across the road at the window where the grisette had been wont to sit, sewing her rose-colored skirt for a students' ball, the shutters were fastened, the owners of the dwelling were gone to prison for debts that they owed for bread and vegetables.

Though it was the first morning of a new year, there were no mirth, no gayety, no greetings, little movement, in the passage way: there were only a ragged child raking in the snow for bits of offal, and a fat, pampered cat, the savage pet of a butcher, watching to seize a bird, whose half-frozen, heavily-weighted wings dragged it slowly through the descending snow.

Tricotrin stood at his garret lattice and looked down awhile upon the desolation. It was the day of the city's uttermost rejoicing; but there was no rejoicing here.

Even the elastic mirth of the national temper was killed under the cold and the hunger, that came with a season of almost unexampled severity.

Like the attic of Teufelsdröckh, "in the highest house of the Wahngasse," it was his watch-tower whence he "*could* behold all the life circulation of the city." With

Teufelsdröckh he could say, "I look down into that wasp nest, or beehive, and witness their wax-laying, and honey-making, and poison brewing, and choking by sulphur From the palace esplanade where music plays while serene highness is pleased to eat his victuals, down the low lane, where, in her door-sill, the aged widow, knitting for a thin livelihood, sits to feel the afternoon sun, I see it all."

Saw it—with that far-reaching, clear, penetrating vision which belongs only to that mind which men, for want of a better name, have called the poet's; which by the infinitude of sympathy attains to the infinitude of comprehension; which understands all, because it feels all things; and which withholds the largeness of its justice, and the insight of its tenderness, as little from the palace as from the hovel, from the throes of ambition as from the travail of poverty.

He looked out, from his attic window, upon the snowy morning:—the ragged child fled away with a scream as an old tin pot was flung at his head from a doorway near, with a shower of curses; the cat bounced on the frozen, fluttering bird, that gave its life up with scarcely an effort at resistance.

A little way farther on, the child, having been punished while innocent, deemed it as well to be guilty, and snatched a roll from a baker's stall unperceived, and darted out of sight with his theft; the cat having been successful in killing her prey, choked herself with the broken bones and bloody feathers, yet beat off with tooth and talon a weakly kitten that crept timidly near her for the scraps of ruffled plumage that were left.

"So the year begins!" he thought, "with two fables set in motion,—the famine that is turned to guilt by unjust punishment, the greed that success makes savage and venomous. Between them they make up the world! And here, one pities the lad, one is enraged with the cat, but neither our pity nor our rage will make up the lost loaf to the baker, or the lost life to the bird. There is the toughest puzzle of the problem. Neither our compassion nor our anger are of much use after all."

The half-entangled metaphorical fancies drifted idly

through his brain, as the baker discovered his missing roll with outcries and lamentations, and the cat dealt its feeble fellow a final stroke that sent it shrieking into a cellar.

Thus the year commenced on the chill, bleak, biting morning of its first day.

He turned from the lattice as a small, pale, black-eyed maiden brought him his coffee and roll. He gave her a little piece of silver.

"Here, Flore—take that to your friend, Réné, over the way. Tell him I saw a lad run off with one of his loaves just this moment; and I know he can ill afford to lose it with wheat at the price it is, and his two old people to keep all the winter through."

The girl nodded, and went off, willingly and with a bright laugh: the baker was a favorite with her, a good-hearted laborious youth from the Cévennes, who had hard work to maintain, singlehanded, two helpless aged women, one blind, the other paralyzed,—his mother and grandmother, who, if ever his breadshop should be closed, would be turned out upon public charity. Réné loved the black eyes of the little Flore right well: but there was no chance that he could marry her, while those two old women should sit on either side of his stove, needing all the warmth its scanty fuel could yield. He got no gratitude, and no thanks for it: the two women muttered and crooned against him, day and night, because the room was so small, the tiled floor so cold, the coffee so rough, the sugar so scanty, the bread so stale, the soup so flavorless: but he went on uncomplainingly with the execution of his duty to them, in that almost unconscious self-sacrifice which is one of the best and purest things found under the "sulphur-chokings" of the lives of the poor.

When the girl was gone, Tricotrin broke off a great piece of his own roll, and scattered it in crumbs upon his window-sill, and on the stone ledge that ran beneath it: the robins and the sparrows soon fluttered to the feast.

"There!" he said to Mistigri, with a laugh. "Do you see, little one? That is just about the measure of all we social philosophers ever contribute to the redressing of the world's wrong-doings—save one starving songster out of a million, and amend one theft out of ten thousand mil-

lions! A fine thing to crow over and be proud of, truly! Perhaps the cat is the wiser moralist of all of us, after all, —'I am fat, I have talons, I can be cunning and strong at once, and therefore I can be successful,' she says. 'Why should a little wretched bird, half dead already, with drenched wings, and maw empty of food, not perish to give me a succulent morsel?' That is the cat's argument: it is the argument of the *tyrannis* everywhere. And the birds, somehow or other, always leave the safety of their high roof-tops, and their ambient air, to come down where the cat sits; because, though within reach of her claws, they thus get warmth, and crumbs, and wool for their nests, where she is. And so the nations ever leave their liberties, and their simplicities, and their hardy freedoms, and the roof-tops of their republics if by chance they have ever flown so far, to cluster round some fierce *tyrannis*, subtle and strong in one; because though they are pecked and slain by talon and fang to sate insatiate greed, they find food easier to be got, and the wherewithal to line their nests more abundant, where a despot feeds his mob into a proletariat, than where there were only the freedom of the air and the elevation of the mountain-tops. The cat kills, aye; but each foolish bird deems that he himself will have the good luck to escape her, and each comes down to fatten on the refuse she has left on her plate as a lure for him. There is always the cat for the sparrow—the *tyrannis* for the republic,—that once has learnt to covet!"

And with that piece of political apologue to Mistigri, he gave her a cup of hot milk, from which she drank with dainty lady's ways, and which she enjoyed more than she did the political moralizing, and betook himself to his own breakfast.

It was noon; and he had long before given his new-year greeting to the household, and tendered and received the simple gifts which, in this quarter, carried alike a pleasure and a sincerity unknown where gold went by handfuls to the buying of treasures made worthless and wearisome by hackneyed custom.

There was one gift that had made his own heart quicken with a throb of rejoicing.

It had come to him late on the previous night, brought by the hands of a sturdy youth of the shores of Finisterre, who had wandered, in self-will, and on the spur of a young man's vague ambitions and discontent, up to the great city; with some such seething impatience and aspiration in his soul as were once in the lion-heart of the farmer's son from Arcis-sur-Aube. It stood now above the stove, in the lofty whitewashed barren garret, wherein the Greek Canaris had once been fed and succored, and the Waif of the Loire had once dreamed her dreams over her roasting chestnuts. It was the model of a ship, cut out of oak that was dark as ebony from long burial beneath sea-water: it had been carved with exceeding skill and patience, with no better instruments than a rude clasp-knife and an oyster-shell ground to a fine edge; and had been polished with the sands of the shore till it shone like black marble, where it stood against the whitewashed wall.

On it was cut:

"Rioz to Tricotrin."

It had been the work of several long winters, shaped to the measure of the beating sea, fashioned to the dies iræ of the storm wind.

To every other eye it was a toy, something clumsily made, perchance, as by a fisherman's rough hands and ill-suited tools; the mere model in old wreck-wood of a fishing-smack But to him it bore a story of a life redeemed, of a life conquered, of a life saved from the hell of its own passions by justice and by patience—a story of self-conquest as great, of self-denial as strong, of travail with temptation as bitter, of expiation in pain as long-enduring, as were ever symbolized by the white crucifix above cathedral altars.

It had come far to him; come from that iron-bound, furious, terrific coast upon the western waters, where he had dwelt for three years asunder from the world, and away from all its beauty and its joy, that he might drag one human life from the blackness of its guilt as he would have dragged it from the seizure of the waves.

It had come far to him from that old Armorican shore;

and it had moved him strangely; speaking to him with a voice that he alone could hear.

"Chut! Mistigri," he said softly, as his eyes fell on it where he sat. "I was wrong to say there are only the cat and the sparrows, only the tyrannis and the proletariat;—are there not ever, if we will only look for them, some battle to be fought, some patience to be needed, some vileness to be wrestled with, some greatness to be rescued? Bah, little one! If we only all remembered that, and occupied ourselves with that, we should be doing more good than by raving about the cat's talons, and blaming the sparrows for not living on hill-tops like eagles!"

Mistigri finished her milk, inattentive to his discourse; in her secret heart she sympathized much with the cats, little with the sparrows, not at all with the eagles. Mistigri had been reared in the atmosphere of republicanism; like many democrats by education, she only really admired the "tyrannis," and had she lived in the days of Dictatorship, would have sat upon Sulla's shoulder.

Tricotrin rose, put on his loose coat of furs, thrust her gently into its breast pocket, and went out into the snow.

The kitten which had been driven away had returned, and having eaten up the blood-flecked feathers had set itself to watch upon its own account.

"There!" murmured Tricotrin to the monkey. "You see that is always the way—it is never the *tyrannis* that is the sole evil; there are always the blood-suckers that seize what the chief talon has spared, there are always the followers and imitators who multiply one evil into a hundred. The hill-tops are cold, my good friend-sparrows, but believe me they are far better."

The proletarian sparrows, however, disregarded him, and continued to put themselves within cats' reach, for sake of the crumbs of food left on the platter, as he turned out of the passage-way and took his road to cross the river into the aristocratic quarters of Paris.

These were thronged, busy, mirthful, glittering, with the gay crowds of holiday-makers and gift-buyers; he paid no heed to anything he saw upon the way, not loitering as his habit was for jest, or act, or indolent

amusement with the humorous of the town, but pressing straight onward into the patrician parts he sought.

His eyes were eager, anxious, clouded, sunlit, all at once: like the eyes of one who goes to what is half anguish and half ecstasy.

He paused at length before the massive metal gates of a great court.

In years long gone by, when, in scorching midsummer weather the blood of men had been heated to fever-heat, and broken into sanguinary act as over-ripe grass breaks into flame, a great mob had beaten in with maddened blows those strong-wrought brazen gates, and forced themselves into the court within, and spread over it like a flood, and sworn to sack and burn all that they beheld. And they had been driven back by him, scourged with his scornful rebuke as with the stripes of a whip, as he saved the Lirà Palace from destruction.

Now he went thither—doubtful how he should gain admittance through the flippant, idle, insolent herd of lackeys and of pages that lounged through their indolent days in its halls and corridors.

"Your duchess is visible?" he asked of them, as crossing the great court he entered the first hall, lofty, vaulted, all of white marble, with only touches of dead gold and of deep purple to break its purity and vastness.

"She is come from Spain; but she will not be likely to receive you!" said one of the group of pages, with sneering impudence, glancing at the new-comer, whom he recognized as a mad bohemian, whom the people cherished, but who was never seen anywhere save in hovels, and wine-shops, and thieves' haunts, and artists' attics.

"That question is not for you to ask or to decide," said Tricotrin, tranquilly. "Go—and tell your mistress that I am here."

"And who may 'I' be?" scoffed the page, incensed at the tone and at the words.

"Tricotrin," he answered simply. "Play no longer with phrases; do your errand, and bring me word what her pleasure is."

The page loitered, sorely inclined to test the patience *of his* adversary under insolence and torment; but some-

thing fearful of such self-indulgence, sent the message through other servants to her chamberlain, who took it sullenly, not without reluctance and wonder; though he was aware that the new-comer had been held in high esteem by his late master, and had done him great service in days of revolution.

The chamberlain passed through several chambers, picture-cabinets, and reception-rooms, and entered at length an apartment looking on the gardens at the back of the hôtel; an octagon, all azure, and silver, and tempered light, and delicate fragrance, with walls after Boucher, and the laughing Hours imitated from Coreggio dancing in a joyous band around the ceiling.

Sunk among cushions was the most lovely woman of her time and of her court. The fire gleams flashed on the silk folds of skirts, whose negligence was the supreme perfection of art: her fair hands glowed with rings; and as she glanced at a book that lay upon her lap, she toyed with a Polichinelle, whose bells were of gold, whose tambourine was circled with pearls, and who had cost that morning seven hundred francs.

Around her were strewn jewel caskets, bonbon boxes, bouquets, playthings, marvelous in ingenuity and extravagance, fans of every make and of inconceivable costliness, all that fancy could fashion, and riches be wasted on; as though every shop in Paris had been emptied there, in the lavishness of the new-year offerings. And at a third of them she had not looked.

There is a wild and wayward destiny in life which ever loads fruition with satiety.

Lost in languid, sunny, victorious musing, she did not hear her servant's entrance until he had approached her, and spoken the few words of the message with hesitating deference, and scarcely concealed expectancy of a refusal.

She started slightly, and over her face swept for a moment a shadow of annoyance, mingled with another feeling that her astute attendant could not analyze. Both were instantly banished; she answered with tranquil indifference.

"Certainly. Admit him here."

Her chamberlain backed out from her presence, filled

with a curiosity that he dared not utter. A few minutes went by, then into her chamber was ushered,—one, who to her conscience, her memory, and her life, was a Reproach.

He bent his head before her, and stood still, without advancing, while the attendants closed the door behind him.

She, with a flush over the fairness of her brow, rose with her hands outstretched, her rich silks and laces trailing round her, her loveliness shrined in the dazzling heaps of her strewn new-year gifts. Her first impulse was of proud shameful pain; her next of conscience-stricken and awakening loyalty.

He shaded his eyes one moment with his hand with the gesture of one whom the sun blinds, then came to her and took her own hands in his in silence. There was no one near to witness how a bohemian was received by a great lady.

"Viva!"—that was all he said; but in the single word was a caress and a benediction beyond all that longer utterance could have given.

She, a proud and splendid woman, in the plenitude of power, and the dauntlessness of empire, shrank slightly as she heard it; it was fraught with all that she would have buried in oblivion forever; it recalled all that galled, and fretted, and embittered her cloudless and haughty life. With that word came back to her all the shame she burned to ignore and forget, as though it had never been; it brought with it all the echoes of that early and innocent affection to which she had so long been faithless and disloyal.

She was cold, while she knew coldness so base; she was restless under his gaze, though she knew that so much love looked on her in it; she was stung with impatience and with false pride, though she knew that in him she saw the savior of her existence.

It had been years since she had beheld him, and in those years the power of the world and the poison of vanity had eaten far into the purer gold of her nature.

"It is so long since I have seen you!" she murmured, as she drew her hands from his hold gently, and sank

among the cushions of her couch, turning her eyes upon him.

"Nay,—not longer than is best," he answered her, with a tremor in his voice. "You had seen me oftener had you missed the sight of me. But that was not probable; not possible."

She hurriedly began to utter the denial that courtesy compelled and gratitude required.

He stopped her with a gesture, slight, but of authority.

"Hush! No disclaimer against truth out of courtesy to me. Think you I cease to know your heart better than you know it yourself? You forgot me; it was natural, inevitable. Why not?—why not?"

There was an unconscious pathos and wistfulness in his accent; as though, against himself and his rights which arraigned her, he pleaded excuse for the negligence and the ingratitude of the one who owed him her rescue from the grave.

Her eyelids fell; her forehead flushed; the imperial coquette felt humbled in her own sight.

"You deem me very base," she murmured.

"Base? No. Only,—a woman! Long ago did I not tell thee how it would be with me and thee? I knew the world's work. Thou didst not,—then. But *I* do not blame thee, Viva."

His phrase had changed insensibly into the familiar "thou;" and his eyes, as they dwelt upon her, had the yearning love of lover, husband, father, poet, all blended in one passion,—a passion mighty as death, and which would live and die, holding eternal silence.

Her cheeks burned as she heard, she breathed quickly with agitation: at the sound of his voice the old, warm, reverent tenderness stirred from its embers in her heart; and yet,—it seemed so hard that one should live who knew what she had been, it seemed so bitter that one should look on her who could remember her the child of charity!

He watched her, reading well her thoughts; and gazing at the marvelous change wrought in her; at the perfection, as of some superb tropical flower, to which her early promise had expanded, at the magic whereby the fair

child that he had known had altered into this magnificent patrician.

A young girl, lovely as a poet's ideal of Gretchen, had been crowned by the Loire-side queen of the vintage-feast: but a woman, superb as a sculptor's dream of Aspasia, was before him now. He gazed at her long, then turned away as with a sudden pang of unbearable agony.

"Good God! How changed you are!"

She smiled, a dreamy, haughty, careless smile. She knew it well, and was proud of the change that to him was so bitter. Yet something in the phrase jarred on her: she had so long tried to forget that she had ever been otherwise than what she was now, that the trial had brought success with herself, and self-persuasion had almost induced self-deception.

And she did not heed, or did not even divine, the anguish that change bore for him.

It was never betrayed. She knew well that he loved her: but she never dreamed how he loved her. It was a martyrdom, without even the reward of recognition.

"I could scarcely be otherwise than changed," she answered him musingly. "Do you know—do you know—it seems scarcely possible to me that I could ever have been the child *you* knew and succored?"

"Does it?" he replied, gently; for he never lost gentleness to her, however deeply she might wound him. "That is very natural, I dare say. Yes: it is inevitable you should be changed; and in much more than mere form. You have a lofty station, Viva?"

"Yes,"—her delicate brows contracted; the Duchess de Lirà, whom none ever addressed save by titles of dignity and reverence, could have wished that familiar pet-name of her childhood, that relic of her foundling's estate, dropped out forever into oblivion.

"You have the whole of the Lirà properties?" he asked.

"Every acre; every sou. He had not a living relative. He could will them where he would."

"His was a great nature—a noble nature."

"He was most generous,—yes."

"Did he suffer much?"

"Not much—I trust. He died in my absence; but calmly, and painlessly, they assured me."

"You regretted him?"

The color flushed her face again.

"Not so much as I ought; I knew that well at the time. I regretted his mother's death far more. I grew to love her well, and she loved me——"

"But so did he—God knows!"

"Ah, yes!—far more than I merited, you would say. That I am sure. But one cannot love merely *because* one is loved, you know? He was most good, most gentle, most thoughtful for me, and I owed him very much; but——"

"He was nothing to you! No; you have had too much tenderness in your life to know its worth. You are surfeited with it, and it is valueless. Had you had but a few crumbs instead of such abundant banquets, you would feel very differently. Bread is tasteless to the rich man; but bread to the poor man is as the apples of paradise. He was aware that you cared nothing for him?"

"He must have been so. I never used dissimulation. They made me very happy, and I liked them—thus; but I never professed attachment I did not feel. Besides—I have no belief in that idyllic folly they call 'love!'"

"You have not?"——she had no belief in love, while over her life watched a love exhaustless, unrepaid, purified to sublimity, and free from one murmur of reproach against her!

She looked quickly up at him.

"Of what are you thinking?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"Surely."

"Well—I thought that the foundling, who was mine, would have flung back, as disgrace and insult, the bribe of a silver coin that should have been offered her to purchase a single kiss from her lips. But the aristocrat, with whose life I have nothing to do, had so little of that true pride left, that she saw no shame in bartering for gold and rank all her youth, all her beauty, all her soul!"

The simplicity of the words had a grand rebuke, a rebuke that stung her keenly. She had enough still in her

of the temper which had made her loathe her young lover's golden toys, to make her now feel every barb of the censure to the quick.

"You blame me because I am married!" she murmured, with an impatient irritation.

"Because you married without love. The woman who does so sells herself as utterly as, and little less basely than, the courtesan."

She gave a languid gesture of offense. Truth lay in his words; and unwelcome truth, with its severity and its nakedness, was an outrage that never approached her graceful presence.

"You speak strongly on a singular subject," she answered, coldly. "I am not accustomed to such language. I view marriage as the world, I believe, views it; and at the time of my own you were informed of it, and you offered no objections——"

"I bade you do as you desired. It was not for me to stand between you and the magnificence you coveted and could obtain. You knew what I thought, full well. But I have not come hither to upbraid you for that which is past. I pitied the man who spent his whole soul on you, and bought your loveliness through his wealth, and found that, squander what he would, he could not buy one throb of tenderness, one pulse of warmth! I pitied him from my heart——"

"Others envied him!"

There were all the insolence of supreme vanity, all the sovereignty of supreme triumph, in the accent with which the brief phrase was uttered.

"They might do so. I was not among them," he answered, gravely. "He purchased a bird without a song, a rose without fragrance, a sun without warmth. For—he bought your beauty without a soul! And you left him to die in your absence!"

Her white, delicate teeth bit the lower lip of her bow-like mouth. She moved impatiently, contemptuously. She,—whom none ever crossed or contradicted in her slightest whim or caprice,—to be arraigned and censured by a wanderer, a bohemian, an outcast! For thus in her thoughts she classed now the redeemer of her life.

"You are angered because I say this thing," he pursued. "I will say more. You chose to wed with him because he was noble, he was of great riches, he could give you a lofty station——"

"Who else would have done so?" she interrupted him passionately. "You forget! I had no name, no parentage, though means were found to hide this, and give me in semblance foreign origin; there was not another of such rank as his that could have wedded one under such social ban as mine without exposure of it; there was not another who could have concealed the truth from the world as he could, nor from whom it could have been withheld."

"No; and therefore for that cause you sold yourself to him. I repeat the word that galls you so greatly. But it is precisely because this man loved you so tenderly, so generously, so patiently, that your sin against him was so dark. You took all, and repaid him nothing in the only coin you had to give; and when he died you were only—in your heart—content to be so soon left free, to be so soon unchained to enjoy all the possessions that he gave without the burden on them of their giver's life."

She was silent; but the hand which had let fall the Polichinelle beat impatiently on the mosaic table beside her couch, and a shadow of vehement offense, mingled with something of repentance and of consciousness, darkened her fair and serene face. She knew that he read her soul with all his olden accuracy; she knew that he spoke what was but the simple truth.

She glanced at him, and felt steal on her the wonder which, since she had known the world, had often come across her mind, as to whence arose that strange and strong unlikeness betwixt his fortunes and his bearing.

She—grown keenly critical, scornfully indifferent, and very difficult to impress—was struck as she had never been with the authority, the dignity, the kingliness of his manner, the pure accent of his voice, the careless grace of his movements. In her early years this question had never occurred to her. She had had no standard with which to compare him: now she wondered, in this first moment of his entrance to her, whence he came, how he

had become what he was,—this man who was without grade and without home, who lived among the peasantry, the populace, the fisher-people, who was an itinerant and a socialist, yet who had about him a command monarchs might have envied, and a beauty that painters might have given to an Agamemnon.

Once, when she had still been his, the story of his life had been upon his lips to tell her. The impulse had been repressed, the tale remained untold forever.

"Why did you never come to me while my husband lived?" she asked him suddenly.

Now and again she had seen him; seen him as he sold the Italian boy's images to the populace, as he stood outside the gates of the Tuileries that she quitted, as she rode through a German pine-forest, as she drove through a Lombardic city, as she watched the Roman Carnival from her balcony, as she glided over the ice of Neva to the music of her silver sleigh-bells. She had seen him often—ever with a strange flush, a strange pang, a strange emotion of mingled sorrow and delight, tenderness and shame. But from the time that he had heard of her marriage, he had never approached her.

The unloved lord who, heaping all his treasures on her, yet could not win one soft thought from her, divined through sympathy the reason of this absence. She never did. So little did she comprehend his motive that she, in all her eminence, in all her brilliancy, felt oftentimes a pained and passionate anger that this man, whom still in her soul she loved as she had loved no other living creature, should thus withhold himself from witnessing her glories.

"Why did you never come?" she repeated, with imperious persistency. "The duke held you in warm esteem, in high honor—you know that!"

"I do not think my absence lessened either his esteem or his honor. I never came to you because—because—no matter why! I acted as I deemed best. You need not question that."

She was stilled and vaguely disquieted by the reply. Even yet, despite the lapse of years, he possessed an influence over her that no other had ever attained.

"You lead a brilliant life?" he pursued, desirous to turn aside from the subject on which she pressed him.

"I lead the customary life of my station:"

She hesitated a moment; the thought crossed her mind, could not she pay by Power the debt that Gratitude had left unpaid? Was there no benefit possible from her high position and vast influence that might strike the balance between them, and do something to lessen that weight of obligation which it so galled her proud throat to bear?

But the mere thought looked insult to him. She did not dare to utter it aloud.

"I saw something of the fashion in which you seek to make the hours fly, down at your castle in the south," he continued. "I arrived there too late to have an interview with you there. You were gone to the royal marriage in Spain; but I heard much of you on your estate, much of the magnificence of your hospitalities——"

She turned her head with that smile wherewith she was accustomed to deal as she chose with the souls of men.

"Do not be content with hearsay of them. Let them be shown to, and tested by, yourself. That will give me far more pleasure."

It was a courtly, graceful, elegant utterance; but it struck cold as ice to his heart. There was no warmth in it; there was only the polished suavity of conventional courtesy.

"I have never sat at any gold-laden table. I shall not commence with yours," he said curtly. "Why let us deal in this hypocrisy? You know as well as I—I as well as you—that it would only be irritation and ignominy to you to see me among your guests. You could not account for me: you would have to present me as 'Tricotrin, the bohemian,' you would be compelled to admit that I had no friends except the People,—no, I know your nature far too well, and that of the world you live in, to impose any such penalty and penance upon you. You see—I can have some sympathy with the class to which you belong—I can even sympathize with its false shame!"

The contemptuous bitterness of his answer stung the

latent truth in her into life; she was pained by it, and the natural frankness of her temper broke into speech.

"Ah!" she said, with involuntary self-scorn, "there you do *them* wrong, not me. If I had been born and reared in their rank, I should not know that 'false shame.' The Order never has it: it is far too proud of itself. An hereditary prince may shake hands with a beggar, he cannot lose rank thereby: it is the new-comer into honors and splendors who dares not imperil his fresh titles by touching the beggar, lest the world cry, 'see—he runs to his brother!'"

He looked at her earnestly.

"You have the acuteness and the sarcasm in you to see this," he said, "and yet——"

"And yet I am no better than what I satirize! Is that an uncommon fault in your Juvenals and Voltaires and Swifts? So—you heard of me in the south. What do my people say?"

And despite the momentary self-dissection in which she had lashed herself scornfully as an alien, and adventuress, in the great order to which she now belonged, there were all the royalty of possession, all the negligence of command, in the intonation of those words, "my people." In such a tone might Mariâ Theresa have spoken!

"Your people?" he echoed, with a certain ironic disdain that cut her pride hardly. "Well, they talk of your splended entertainments; you do not give them much else to talk of, I believe, except it be of the extortions and oppressions of your stewards."

"Extortions! Oppressions! I never heard of any."

"Doubtless. How should you hear? If a wood-cutter or a charcoal-burner, grimy, starved, and half clad, found his way on to your terraces to accuse your great servants of peculation and tyrannies, which would be be likeliest to get—a blow from a lackey's wand if he did not shuffle away quickly enough, or a polite ushering in to your audience-chamber?"

She smiled a little, but vexatiously.

"Well! Would you have my rooms thronged all day with a mob of foresters and burrowers in the earth?"

"There is a time for all things. There can be hours

set apart for such hearings. It is just that barring out of the unjustly-oppressed from the audience-room, when they are only armed with an appeal, that brings, sooner or later, the clamorous mob, armed with clubs and pikes, into the banqueting-hall. It is not the nobles' fault, it is the fault of their hirelings: for none are so brutal to the poor as those who have once been of them. You have the same stewards that the Duke de Lirà employed, I suppose?"

She colored a little.

"Not in the south. The person he had left in office there opposed my will in one or two matters: one does not pay servants to have them dispute, discuss, advise, and finally disobey. I discharged him; and obtained one who knew his place better."

"Who gives you lip-service and the form of obedience that lies in servility; and makes your name hated throughout your estates, by wringing subsidies from the poverty-stricken for his own private purse: yes—I dare say that is knowing his place better! As modern enlightenment goes. But—despite your sanction of his reign—I shall be glad if you will take some pity on an old truffle hunter in your woods. He is very old, and lame; can live only a few years at most; and having dwelt on the Lirà estates from his birth upward, may claim to have the trouble of keeping his body and soul together made somewhat easier to him. Besides, he has a piteous story."

"Assuredly. I will direct them to see that he wants for nothing. Will you give me his name?"

"It is Aubin Ralcor."

She noted it down on the little ivory tablet hanging by its gold chain at her side. She did not ask the old man's history, so he left it unrelated. He felt that the memory of Coriolis must still be painful and unwelcome to her.

"You know, I have been but little in our own country," she pursued, as though in apology for her ignorance of the necessities of the poor upon her lands. "We were occasionally in Paris, but far oftener abroad. The year after the duke's death I passed in retirement in my villa upon *Como. The only time* I have been at the castle I

have been surrounded for a few weeks only with a circle of guests that left me little time for thought. This summer I entertained the king of——but you know all these things?"

She broke off somewhat hastily, with a sense of anger, that nothing in her dignities or in her splendors could move him to surprise at, or to veneration of them.

"Yes," he answered her. "There is nothing in your life I do not know."

"But how? I have met you so rarely."

"That may easily be. You would probably have discerned me, had your thoughts been of me. Anyhow I have watched you—many times. But I do not want to talk of myself; here is your oldest friend whom you have not yet seen."

She started as the monkey sprang forth from where it had slumbered in his pocket: the sight of the little animal recalled so many memories in such vivid intensity.

She covered her eyes with her hand for awhile, and breathed rapidly and with emotion. She was once more a child on the banks of the sunny Loire: she saw once more the innocent and lowly home from which she had gone without one backward glance of gratitude or of regret. She was moved more keenly than she had been for many years.

But her life had taught her to conquer and conceal all agitation; she was quick to recover her habitual calm and negligence.

She stretched out her jeweled hands full of sweetmeats from the new-year boxes.

"Ah, little Mistigri! She is still alive! How old she must be by now! Mistigri, will you not eat my sugared almonds?"

Mistigri was either shy or cross: she would not be cajoled into touching one of the dainty, pretty, colored crystals of sugar: she did not recognize her old playmate, for whose rescue she had once voted with her filbert, in this brilliant aristocrat who held her out these bonbons.

"Mistigri does not know you," he said quietly, stroking the little black averted head. "Well! the world of Paris *has* emptied itself upon you in your new-year gifts. And

what pleasure do they give you—all these jeweled cases, all these splendid trifles?"

She smiled: the smile that in his eyes had no light.

"Pleasure! Do you think me a child still, to take pleasure in those bagatelles; they are only custom."

"Ah! And yet to have such things of custom, or the like, men will barter their honesty and women their honor. That is droll! Which is the richer? he who has but little but enjoys all, or he who has much but with all is sated? A few years since how your heart panted for such 'bagatelles.' Yet, then a wreath of river-lilies, a leaf full of wild strawberries, made you glad. Which was the richer—your present or your past?"

"Which? How strange a question! There can be little doubt, I imagine. Though I have lost a child's love for new-year presents, there are many——"

"Costlier toys? Men's love and peace and honor? Yes: there are, for women such as you. But, Duchess Viva, once you broke and trod upon a grape garland, and when you had destroyed it, wept vain tears over the bruised leaves. Take heed you never do so with a life."

"The poor grape garland!" she said, with a careless, low laugh, avoiding the rest of his speech. "I remember it, and my foolish passion, too; but it reminds me to ask you—the dear old woman—'grand'mère,'—is she well?"

"Yes. She is well," he answered gravely.

"She has always had my money—my presents?" she asked hurriedly, a hot flush coming and going on her face.

"Yes: she received them."

"And was pleased with them? I sent them regularly, but she could not write to tell me whether she liked them."

"You remember the walnut press in her little bedroom?"

"I think I do—yes."

"Well; in it lie all your gold and all your gifts. She would not pain you by returning them: but neither would she use alms from one who, for so many years, has never cared to look upon her face. You have yet to learn that money cannot heal a wound that negligence has dealt;

and that there are some debts which cannot be repaid in coin."

The color deepened in her face, conscience in her warred with irritated pride.

"That is absurd," she murmured. "I never forgot to supply her with what she needed——"

"She needed nothing, except the one thing you never gave her."

"I should have gone to see her," she said rapidly, with an unconscious accent of apology and self-excuse. "But —so many things engaged me; at first I was so entirely under their rule, and latterly I have been abroad so very much. I will go down and visit her soon—as soon as the days are somewhat brighter."

"You have said that long: and—she has eighty-nine years. The spring does not always bring new life to the old and leafless trees."

She was silent: he had stirred her heart, but he did not move her pride.

He took up the Polichinelle, true to his habits of saying no useless words; and he was reluctant to seek for the brave old woman the remembrance that was not instinctive and born of gratitude.

"My old friend Punchinello?" he said, "all jeweled and gold-laden, too: well, puppets as empty, and less harmless and mirth-giving than he, have eaten up the nation's gold often ere now. A handsome puppet, moreover, which all crowned marionettes are not."

"I bought it for a little Russian prince—the son of great friends of mine."

"Ah! And it cost?"

"Seven hundred francs."

Tricotrin shook the toy lightly, till the little turquoise-studded bells rang a chime.

"So, Punch!—you lie in a silk and eider-down box, and cost seven hundred francs. Fie, fie! Why, you are almost as costly and useless as a king!—you, too, who have made fun for the people everywhere ever since the days of Rome. Punch—the Russian boy will break you in ten minutes; and outside the gates yonder I met a *girl,* once your mistress's playmate, Edmée Roxal, whose

son lies dead in her arms because she had not money to buy him a loaf. Contrasts are sharp in this world, Punch! and the populace that you have wagged your head for through so many generations has always got steel or shot if it ventured to find that out, and object to it once in awhile."

She looked up; and shook hurriedly out a shower of gold from her purse.

"Edmée Roxal?—her child dead of want? How fearful! Give her these!"

He put them gently back.

"No. They are not wanted now. Money will not buy back from King Death. And—for Edmée herself; she lies in hospital, delirious, clinching the stiffened limbs of the infant to her breast. Neither you nor Polichinelle can help that: only—when you give so much for him and his kind,—think of these things, and of your safe haven from them!"

"But we never do think of these things!"

There were carelessness, regret, impatience, apology, all in the words: she, beautiful, luxurious, adored, had wholly ceased to remember that a time had been when "these things" would have been her portion also, in all their cruelty and nakedness, had not his hand been stretched to rescue her.

"True," he said, simply, "you never do."

To him it was not possible to recall that time to her; since, to awaken her soul to gratitude for the mercies of her fate, he must also have called on gratitude for himself.

"But when this girl—Edmée—is well again, let me give her all that can comfort her?—give it through you?" she said quickly. "You will say nothing of who I am——"

"I promised you silence long ago. I never justified you in supposing that my promises were given to be broken."

There was a sternness in the answer that moved her with a certain sense that was almost as of fear: the greatness, the singularity, the mysteries of this life, that had so long been interwoven with her own, bewildered her: she could not comprehend them.

He rose; and stood before her, gazing at her with a look under which her eyes sank. Little by little she had been drawn away from him, till between them scarcely a bond remained. The thought crossed him—would he after all have been so selfishly in error, so blind through the mists of passion, if he had kept her, through her ignorance, in his own hands, under his own law and love? Would he not have made her happiness purer, her life truer, her future safer, because nearer God, than they now were; brilliant, imperious, pampered, exquisite creature though she was? She was great, she was lovely, she was content, she was unrivaled; but where was that "divine nature" wherewith he had once believed her dowered?

"Where are your thoughts now?" she asked him once again; restless beneath that fixed and melancholy regard which she could not meet.

A sigh escaped him as he answered:

"Pondering whether the Duchess de Lirà, great in all magnificence though she be, may not after all be poorer than was the child Viva, happy in the simple wealth of the honey, and the chestnuts, and the violets from the woods!"

"I could wish you could permit me to forget that such a child ever lived!"

The impatient and cruel words were uttered, heedless how they struck him, in a moment of haughty wrath that this obscure and nameless past could be quoted against her, that in her path of roses this one thorn should be still beneath her feet. She had ever clung passionately to the belief of some mighty origin having given her birth: for the last years she had shut out from her own sight the remembrance that she had ever been other than she now was. She spoke on the spur of pride, selfishness, offended dignity: she did not feel the baseness and the cowardice of her utterance.

His mouth quivered under the fullness of its snowy silken beard.

"Have I seemed to remind you of it? Forgive me. There is nothing for *you* to remember;—farewell!"

He bowed his head; and laid down upon her hands a

cluster of white and purple violets; lovelier amid the darkness of their broad round leaves, than all the jeweled trifles of art and fashion strewn about her.

"Others give you gold and diamonds," he said wearily. "I have nothing but these. Only,—remember for once enough of your childhood to take them from me as I give."

He turned quickly from her to spare himself and her all need of answer; but the love which had once lived so strongly in her heart was not wholly petrified into death; the nature which had been so long attuned to his, could not but vibrate in some measure to his touch.

She rose swiftly; the look of bygone years in her eyes, the accent of bygone years in her voice. She stretched her hands out to him with all the sweet and contrite grace of her early penitence and supplication.

"Oh! do not think me so vile as I make myself seem! I have not forgotten; I never forget in my heart. It is the world that makes me sin against you; the coldest, vainest, basest, weakest part of me. I know how cold, how false, how guilty I must seem to you; and I have been so! But these flowers are dearer to me than all their jewels, and for my crimes to you I hate myself. To meet you thus,—to be severed from you thus,—to live as though I owed you nothing,—as though I had forgotten your matchless goodness, your infinite mercy,—I think that I must be the guiltiest thing on earth!"

All the ingenuous contrition, all the wayward inconsistencies, all the native tenderness, all the warm and sudden self-reproach, which had been characteristic of her childhood, were on her now, shattering down the pride of an imperious egotism. For the moment she forgot all that had divorced them, for the moment she was to him all that she once had been. For that moment an ecstasy glistened in his eyes,—to die the next.

He took her outstretched hands, and touched them once, lightly, with his lips:

"You have no sins to *me*. And—if you had, did I not long since promise you pardon? Your better nature is not dead in you; cherish it still, it will be greater riches to you than your gold."

And then, he turned and left her.

With the violets lying in her lap she sat long, motionless, and alone.

"Have I deserved to be what I am?" she questioned, the rare voice of remorse speaking in her soul. She knew only too well that she had not.

Yonder, in the vine country, in the little river-house, the woman who had nurtured and fostered her in her infancy was left to loneliness, and sorrow, and old age, unsolaced.

Across the Alps, in the City of the Dead, was the solitary mausoleum of the husband to whom she owed every renown, pleasure, and glory that now illumined her life, and whose vast, mute, boundless love had served her in tenderness and in humility, unrecompensed even by a caress as fond as that she gave her dogs.

And out from her presence had just passed the man to whom her whole existence was one long ingratitude.

"Have I deserved to be what I am?" she thought. "Have I not been base—base—base?"

And she knew herself to be so.

All her life, since the time that she had voluntarily gone from him, had been one long ingratitude against him. She knew it whenever she paused to think; but thought had so little place in her shadowless life.

All things had gone well with this fairest daughter of Hazard. Accident, which seemed her progenitor, had been ever her protector. Fortune and all its chances had been gracious to her.

She had left her early life as far behind her as the beautiful, glittering, ephemeral winged insect of a tropic summer leaves its larvæ bed, in the closed cup of a poppy or a lotus, as it wings its way high into air and sunlight. That she—she so great, so worshiped, so irresponsible, so widely courted, so habituated to idolatry and power and all the ways of wealth—could ever have been that Waif and Stray whereof he spoke, seemed as impossible to her as it is to the full-plumed aphis glancing in the sun to recall the season of its chrysalis slumber.

She!—the most beautiful woman of her world and of her age—had once been that foundling child, reared by a

peasant, succored by a bohemian, dwelling under a cottage roof, and made happy by a gleaner's treasury of scattered cornstalks, by a peasant's gold of honey and yellow gourds, by an infant's jewel store of morning dew-drops and of blue forget-me-nots!

It was bitter to her to think it; to have the memory of it forced upon her; and she paced to and fro the length of her chamber, with restless, uneven steps, as she remembered that, thrust this fact away far down into oblivion as she would, the fact still lived, and could not be destroyed: with all her wealth, with all her empire, this fact was stronger than herself, and could not be abolished by her will.

It was the one canker in her ever-blossoming roses; the one ghost within her joyous palaces; the one bitter drop in her wine-cup's ruby light.

The canker was at her heart, the ghost within her walls, the bitterness upon her lips, in this moment when the odor of the snow-born flowers wafted the memories of her buried childhood to her.

Life had been so fair to her. The years had gone by in one continual blaze of triumph, in one continual hymn of rejoicing. She was great; she was unrivaled; she was satiated with offered love. What else could make the paradise of a woman? From the hour when she had cried, "The fairies have remembered me at last!" the fairies had never again deserted her.

From the hour in which her selection had been made, all things had led her to her new existence, all things divorced her from her old: and no sigh for all she had abandoned ever grated on the ear of those who had made her what she had become.

The haughty temper and far-reaching vision of the aged aristocrat had environed with scrupulous care this child of Chance, in whom her prescience foresaw the future bearer of her name.

She had bent all her skill and all her energies to conceal from the world that the creature she adopted was the offspring of Hazard, nurtured on alms; and to make of her a woman so perfect that the most critical should discover no flaw in her grace or her beauty, in her acts

or her thoughts. And she had been perfectly successful. Swiftly and easily, all the precepts that an unyielding pride could teach, all the impress that an exquisite elegance could make, were stamped on the facile wax of a temperament already akin to them. To Viva, nothing of greatness seemed either new or strange. Rank was no King Cophetua to her, and she no beggar maiden. She was only a long-dethroned princess rightly reinstated in her sovereignty. There was no need to dread her self-betrayal. She wore her purples as though born to them; and even her patrician instructress was compelled to murmur to herself, "If a bastard—surely one of some imperial race, such as there sits not in these days on the fool-filled thrones of Europe."

Travel, culture, change of scene, learning made graceful and alluring, all that could be brought to the moulding of her mind and tastes were given her. She was kept in seclusion and in foreign countries some few years; she was baptized by the Church with a long bead-roll of saintly names, the priests not questioning their liberal patroness; she was changed into that brilliant empress which education and wealth, and an artificial atmosphere, and all the pomps and graces of wealth, can make out of any lovely, vivacious, and impressionable child.

At times, even the cold, and courtly, ever-sarcastic old woman could have wished for a shade more warmth, a touch more earnestness in this glittering volatile thing that radiated round her, and seemed never to be moved to any sense of debt or gratitude, but only to the buoyant exultant sense of victory and of fair fortune. But she wished for them in vain: the only one who could have wakened them was banished.

And, unconsciously, in her sedulous destruction of that one pure, ardent, early tenderness in the young girl's heart, she shaped the weapons of her son's martyrdom.

When at length the silent passion that he had struggled against so long as mere selfish and vain desire was conquered, and spoke, and offered all its matchless possessions, its magnificent gifts, they were accepted with the smiling indifference of a fair, pampered, ambitious creature, who conceived that the donation of her own loveli-

ness balanced all debt between them, yet who, insecure in her singular fate, saw in this alliance the sole possible passage to the security of power.

"I shall be the Duchess de Lirà!" she thought, with a haughty smile; if she thought also with a shuddering sigh, "And I must be his Wife!"

The sudden illness and death of her protectress hastened this union to which she willingly consented, instinctively grasping the sole scepter that was stretched out to her; only seeing the kingdom that lay before her of omnipotence and pleasure, and triumphant vanity, and sure deliverance from all future chance of obscurity or humiliation. The marriage sacrament was administered beside the death-bed of his mother, that no breath of slander, no rumor of injurious wonder, might ever touch the fame of the one who henceforth was to bear a title illustrious for centuries among the princes of the earth.

And the tidings, traveling far from the Austrian city where they tarried, went in the sweet spring evening to the house of Mère Rose.

Attained ambition on her lips was no Dead Sea fruit; but an enchanted apple, ever fresh, ruddy, luscious.

For her sake her lord went forth from the seclusion he had so long preserved, and even approached a court which he abhorred as the court of an usurper, that he might show her to that great world for which she so long had pined. She became the idol, at once the leader, the reigning beauty of her sphere.

Her husband, content only to minister to her wishes and her will, grew the slave to her idlest caprice, and was grateful for her slightest smile. For a second time an immeasurable devotion was laid subject to the rule of her mutable fancies; this time, yet more than the first, it utterly failed to move her to any sense of its priceless value, it was only regarded as a means to the end of her own gratification.

Intoxicated with homage, applause, indulgence, extravagance, pleasure, she did what to few it is given to do,—she realized her wildest dreams. She had but to wish, and she possessed. She had but to look, and she vanquished. Her conscience was stifled, her memory

was killed, her heart never beat but with the throbs of vanity and triumph; love had no peril for her, for she had against it the shield of an all-absorbing self-love.

She lived as exclusively in the present, and as absolutely for herself, as the brightest humming-bird that ever wantoned above roses.

She had once had purer visions: these had all perished. Her moral ruin was not less rapid and complete than were her social ascent and her absolute domination.

So she lived her life; and on the night of the Dorian ball her husband died, in silence and in solitude.

For the hour the impression which that death made on her was vivid, and her self-reproach poignant.

But then she was free,—absolutely free.

> "Light-wedded, and light-widow'd, and unaware of any sort of sorrow."

She passed out once more, after the briefest retirement that custom could sanction, into the noonday blaze of the world she had quitted, tenfold more potent now than ever; for now to the sorcery of her smile was added the sorcery of her gold, which men were also free to strive and win.

No living creature dreamed that in the great French aristocrat there beat the same pulses that had throbbed in the young limbs of the Waif and Stray.

To keep her unseen until time and culture had so changed her that there was no fear of her recognition by the keenest eyes that had ever beheld her, had been the first care of her powerful guardians. Estmere, and the son of Estmere, she had never met; and when one or two of the young nobles who had been at the banquet of Coriolis, and might have recalled some likeness in her to the child whom they had there beheld,—their memories had been too filled with the fair forsaken faces of women for them to heed the resemblance, or to suspect the secret of the one before whom they bowed so low in homage.

Vague mystic rumors did indeed float about concerning her: but the hand of her imperious protectress had been strong enough to lift her high above suspicion; and many expedients had been found and used, with keenest tact,

to supply all flaws, and smooth all strangeness, in her story.

Yet, although all others had so completely forgotten, she could not utterly forget;—not utterly, with those white and purple flowers lying in her hands.

That time had been, when these things, and such things as these, gleaned from wood and pasture, had been her only treasures; when she had owned no more home, or heritage, or food, by right, than such as the bird, forsaken of its flock, can make and find from tufts of grass, and pods of seeding flowers, and any wind-blown alms of nature. That time had been; if she had kept its memory in her heart in gratitude, an amulet against all evil thoughts, a cross to recall to her all those who suffered, a rosary whereby she had counted her faults, her follies, and her better deeds, it had been blessed to her.

As it was,—cast scornfully and cruelly aside, as some detested thing for which she prayed oblivion and annihilation,—it might some day rise up and have its vengeance on her.

And at rare times she feared this, with a fear wholly foreign to her high-couraged and imperious temperament.

The fear was kindred to that which will pursue and move a monarch, whose passage to his throne has been hewn with an iron blade through the granite of gigantic crime, and whose steps have waded through the blood of a murdered people to reach the diadem of his desire.

Was it not over the lifeless bodies of slaughtered loves that she, also, had passed to her victories, and to her kingdom?

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THAT night, at one of the greatest houses of Paris, the most exquisite woman of its courtly assembly bore in her hand a massive cluster of simple blue and white violets—violets, full of a wild forest fragrance, amid the exotics blossoming there.

"Are they for the sake of the Past madame?" asked of her an old marshal, whose youth had known Marengo and Jena, seeing in them the emblems of his Chief.

She turned her eyes on him with a look her lovers had never seen in them.

"Yes! They are for the sake of the Past!"

Those around her wondered eagerly and in surprise what Past this could be of which a creature so young still and so eminent could think with such regret; with her it could not be they knew a Bonapartist memory.

When she went forth to her carriage, one watcher standing by, unseen, among the crowds, caught a glimpse of his violets in her clasp of jeweled gold. And summer dawns had not been sweeter to him than the bleak and stormy night became,—she had enough of the love of her childhood to treasure his flowers thus!

The remembrance of him, slight though it was, sufficed to send back warmth and gladness to his heart; he gave a martyrdom of tenderness, accounting it as naught,—he was touched to passionate thankfulness by this one trivial act.

Thus great natures ever give, and ever receive:—pouring out their gold like water, and into their garners receiving dross in exchange.

CHAPTER XL.

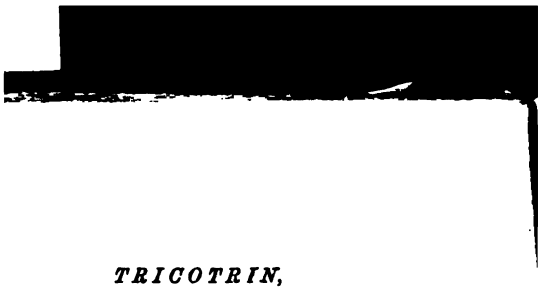
When her carriage had rolled away, Tricotrin also left the gates, and went far away through the Quarter of St. Martin, up toward the thieves' nest of Chaumont.

The thrill of joy which had quivered through him as he had seen the violets in her hand and in her bosom, faded into the depression which ever follows a hope that is unutterably sweet, yet wholly baseless, and which springs up only to perish in all the glory, and all the fragility of the evanescent flower that only blooms for a single day.

She remembered him and her childhood,—that was something. But she was divorced from him forever; and could no more return to him than the fruit, gathered in for a prince's table, can return to the moss-covered branch, where once it hung in a country orchard.

He had known that this would be so; he had foreseen it as the inevitable sequel of that choice which had removed her to the world for which she had longed. Not now for the first hour was its truth before him. He had seen it with each time, through the many years of her separation from him, that he had looked upon her and had watched the actions of her life. But it had never struck on him so strongly or so vividly as when he had beheld her that morning; as when, in every gesture, and smile, and glance, in every languid movement, and contemptuous reply, and negligent grace, he had seen how wholly the gay, wayward, innocent, transparent child, that he once had sheltered, was lost in the patrician woman of the world.

He had kept aloof from her. It had been too keen a suffering for him to provoke it. He, who cast all pain from him on the impulse of a joyous nature as he would have cast an adder from his arm, could not voluntarily seek the *torture that her* presence was. He took heed



that she was content; he assured himself that her own desires were the guide she followed; he kept vigil, how constant and how deeply penetrating she did not dream, over all the changes of her life. But, once having seen that it was well with her, once having learned that in her servitude to ambition she only embraced the success that she craved, he sought her presence little.

During the years that her husband lived she never saw the face of the man she had forsaken, though, once or twice, amid deep garden ways in Italy, or on the waters of old Teutonic streams, she had heard—or had thought that she heard—the music that she had loved in the days of her childhood. And in such moments, under the spell of that sweet and distant melody, her eyes had filled with sudden tears, and her heart with sudden yearning, and the vague sense of a loss, irrevocable and endless, had come over her.

Their lives had drifted asunder, as two boats drift north and south on a river, the distance betwixt them growing longer and longer with each beat of the oars and each sigh of the tide. And for the lives that part thus, there is no reunion. One floats out to the open and sunlit sea; and one passes away to the grave of the stream. Meet again on the river they cannot.

His heart was weary as he went.

Could he have served her he had been content. But what need or what call for service could there be in this fate so royal, so shadowless, so eminent, so coldly and so radiantly clear? She had wealth, and had the world at her feet; she had empire, and had no wish unfulfilled; she had youth, and had all things that render youth glorious. What space in such a life was there for love to fill? She had need of nothing. She had the armies that conquer, she had the sorcery that transmutes, she had the smile that makes fate smile back in answer. What appeal in such a life was there for aid or succor?

Once he had promised her that though she should return to him sin-stained, wretched, broken-hearted, driven from every refuge, and shrinking from every glance, yet would he not forsake her, but would shelter her with his tenderness still. But a sterner trial than this tore the strength

of his love at its roots. He had to stand outside the golden gates of her paradise,—forgotten.

Not rare on this earth is the love that cleaves to the thing it has cherished through guilt, and through wrong, and through misery. But rare, indeed, is the love that still lives while its portion is oblivion, and the thing which it has followed passes away out to a joy that it cannot share, to a light that it cannot behold.

For this is as the love of a god, which forsakes not, though its creatures revile, and blaspheme, and deride it.

His heart was weary within him as he went through the dreary way; the night was bitter and full of storms. The snow-clouds hovered unbroken, but the wind was wild and chill as ice, and ever and again a gust of rain swept with shrill passion over the half-frozen ground, and dulled the few lights burning.

He had come into the quarter of the poor, and into the hotbeds of crime, through the maze of crooked streets and swarming tenements that were alive with guilt as an ant-hill with its insect-swarm, while, furthermost, the cavernous rocks of Chaumont sheltered every sin and every lust in their hideous recesses.* It was ever thus that he exorcised his dark hours. Yet, to-night, the heart-sickness of every poet and every leader of the world was on him, too heavily for even the justice of truth, or the purity of labor, to have worth in his sight.

"What avail?" he thought. "What avail to strive to bring men nearer to the right? They love their darkness best,—why not leave them to it? Age after age the few cast away their lives striving to raise and to ransom the many. What use? Juvenal scourged Rome,—and the same vices that his stripes lashed then, laugh triumphant in Paris to-day! The satirist, and the poet, and the prophet strain their voices in vain as the crowds rush on; they are drowned in the chorus of mad sins and sweet falsehoods! Oh God! the waste of hope, the waste of travail, the waste of pure desire, the waste of high ambitions!—nothing endures but the well-spring of lies

* It is needless to recall that this vile place has been by the late imperial works changed into a spot of healthful recreation and great *beauty*.

that ever rises afresh, and the bay-tree of sin that is green, and stately, and deathless!"

Yet—though in that hour he saw the vanity of labor, the futility of effort, the helplessness of truth against the massed evils and armored insincerities of the world, as men in their hours of loneliness must ever behold them,—yet, he went onward into the Gehenna whither his steps tended.

Above, and hidden in the huge dens of the rocks, assassins, and brigands, and ravishers brooded and glutted over their golden spoil or their writhing prey; and in the horrible streets that lay below, naked children and half-naked women fought and tore at each other like mad dogs, songs of riotous blasphemy were crossed by the din of drunken combatants, and hideous misery with hideous obscenity struggled which should be king regnant there.

The rocks towered up against the black starless skies, silent because, screened in their caverns, men, who had changed to devils, hoarded stolen treasure, and stifled tell-tale shrieks, and crushed out panting life all noiselessly, and strove to find some new variety of lust. But in the quarter of the town beneath them there was a loud tumultuous hell, in which sex and age were alike forgotten, and confounded in one pit of shameless shame:—a pit where human lives were pent together in gasping droves, as if they had lost all semblance of humanity; where one vast caldron of iniquity seethed on and on forever, forever fed afresh. It is in such social bodies as these that the cancer of the world throbs and poisons all that it infects, and taints even that which is in health—a cancer whose sole attempted cure is now and then a random cut from the knife of evil power, that leaves it wider spread than ever, covered, insidious, deadly with the germs of an eternal death.

As the imprecations, the screams, the yells, the laughter worse than any curses, the songs that had so utter a depravity in them, the cries of young children under brutal blows, beat on his ear where he approached Chaumont, a great softness, a great pity came into his eyes.

"God-forgotten, they call you!" he murmured. "Rather man-forsaken."

He was unarmed; he penetrated into a quarter where death waited for any honest man who durst venture his life there; he came among ravening wolves, to whom murder was pastime, and cruelty joy. But he walked on, with the careless courage of his nature. Fear was as far from him as from any eagle of the Engadine; and, moreover, these wolves were as faithful dogs to him, caressing his hand where they bit through to the bone of every other. To him they were tame, and were loyal. He lashed them with scorn; he scourged them with reproach; many a time he seized their prey from out their very jaws; he stood between them and their passions; and he braved them openly in their maddest rage. But they never lifted their weapons against him, and in their most furious moods he was sacred to them. They knew well that there was love and not hate in his soul; and they unconsciously revered what they could not comprehend,—this courage which only feared sin, this pity which could embrace even guilt, this manhood that had every strength, and boldness, and liberty that they honored, and yet was so pure from crime, and so stainless from shame.

He knew that he was safe amid them. Had he not known it he would have gone thither just the same. It was not in his blood to study caution, or dread peril; many a time, with his back against a wall and the haft of a knife against his chest, he had kept a score of desperate brutes at bay, refusing to relinquish them their victim. And he who loved sunlight, and mirth, and the smile in women's eyes, and the gay recklessness of artist life, and the beauty of a summer world, came into the hells of great cities on that simple, unflinching duty to humanity, which was a law the bohemian and the wanderer never broke. Those whom the world cast out he made his brethren; and, if once in a thousand times of trial it was given him to raise a sinking soul from the abyss into the purer upper air of earth, he was content; he earned the only wage he asked.

"They shudder when they read of the Huns and the Ostrogoths pouring down into Rome," he mused, as he passed toward the pandemonium. "They keep a horde as savage, imprisoned in their midst, buried in the very

core of their capitals, side by side with their churches and palaces, and never remember the earthquake that would whelm them if once the pent volcano burst, if once the black mass covered below took flame and broke to the surface! Statesmen multiply their prisons, and strengthen their laws against the crime that is done—and they never take the canker out of the bud, they never save the young child from pollution. Their political economy never studies prevention; it never cleanses the sewers, it only curses the fever-stricken!"

A hideous clangor broke in on his ear as he went, lost in thought, and unheeding the din that he knew so well, worse than the roar of a million wild beasts. This clamor was shriller, viler, more horrible than common; it caught his attention, and lifting his head, he saw at some little distance a red resinous glare.

"Murder is being done; they are never so joyous over aught else," he muttered, as he hastened his steps. He was no optimist to deem his wolves slandered sheep; he knew them as they were, in all their blackest, hardest, most hopeless guilt.

He soon came within sight of the fire; a bonfire blazing in a pent dark court, and throwing its glow on the rocks beyond, while about it hundreds of living creatures swarmed, and shrieked, and sang, and raved, and danced in a saturnalia of devils' joy. A rabble of brigands with bare chests and great arms black with filth, of women disheveled, unclothed, yelling like furies, of gaunt beggars with their filthy rags flying in the wind, and their long lean knives glancing in the air, of children leaping and screaming with delight, surrounded the pile of blazing wood that burned only the fiercer for the falling hail that hissed in its smoke. And above it, hung there to consume by slow degrees, suspended by an iron chain knotted about his waist, and fastened to an iron spout in a wall, swaying in the wind, and uttering awful cries, swung a living human figure.

This was the bacchanalia they enjoyed in the bitter wintry night.

"Ah-ah! How bright he will burn!" screamed a little five-year child, dancing in ecstasy at the finest firework she had ever beheld.

Tricotrin gave a glance at the blackened form, as its chain-halter cracked and shook in the wind: then threw himself with a leap like a stag's among the throng, seized a knife from the hand of a boy ere the lad could resist, sprang on to a broad stone coping on the wall, stretched up, seized the wretch by his waist-chain, cut the cord that knotted the iron links to the projecting spout, and dragged him down on to the ledge where he himself stood. All was done in an instant, ere they knew what he did: they were silent in supreme amaze.

Then a roar broke from all the crowd as with one voice; a roar like a herd of hyenas cheated of their carcass-prey; they loved him in their own fashion, but they loved slaughter more, and they hungered fiercely for that splendid human bonfire.

"Give him to us!" they yelled, while twice a hundred knives glittered in the glare.

He stood above them, on the stone, above the stifling, resinous, scorching pyramid of flame: the creature he had rescued lying at his feet. All his life and ardor had flashed back into his face with the need of action; his eyes blazed with scorn and passion; his white abundant hair blew backward in the wind; his fearless gaze unflinching met the glare of the upturned, bloodshot, thirsty, murderous eyes.

"Give him to you!" he echoed in their own parlance, which he spoke with rapidity and ease. "Am I vile as yourselves, think you? What was his offense?"

The rush of thundering voices hissed out, as with a single breath, the story of the criminal; a new comrade, a puny creature, stealthy as the cat, timid as the hare, who had joined them for awhile, only to spy on them and to betray them to the law: a traitor that deserved ten thousand deaths drawn out in years of torture.

Tricotrin heard: the red light fell upon him as he looked down on the riot that seethed beneath him, and on the knives that menaced him if he did not yield.

"A dark guilt, truly," he said with brevity, as his mellow voice rang clear through the din. "But *you* are not fit for its judges. Fine fellows, indeed, to sit in the judgment-seat—you who would be shot or guillotined, every

one of you, if you but had your deserts. What do you call yourselves—devils, tigers, or men? You have no claim to the last name! A spy is a thing as foul as a viper, I grant; but not to be burnt alive for all that, and you are too utter blackguards yourselves to have any right left in you to punish. Two hundred men, too, against one—glorious equality! For shame, you hellhounds; I knew you were brutes when the bloodthirst was on you, but I did not guess till now you were cowards!"

He knew how to deal with them,—as Dumouriez dealt with his mutinous battalions. The fiery scorn, the contemptuous invective, the dauntless censure struck them dumb, where other words would have excited their mockery, or inflamed their passions. The silence did not last long; they were in furious hatred of their prey, they were in ravening longing for their sport; they closed nearer and nearer, stretching out their gaunt hands to seize, and lifting their knives in the air.

"Give him to us!" they shouted again, with awful blasphemy upon their tongues. Any other than himself they would have hurled down and torn in pieces, as hounds tear offal.

He laughed aloud; with haughty defiance flashing on them from his eyes.

"Give him to you? You think I am a huntsman, to fling the fox to the pack? Off, you scoundrels!—sheathe your knives, I tell you; do you hear? You want my life?—I dare say! You are murderers, and that is your trade. But I do not mean to die in your hell: I should find no worse where devils rage, if the priests' tales be ever so true. This man shall be mine. I say it. You know I never break my word."

The tumult raged higher and higher, swelling out like the hoarse roar of the sea.

"Give him to us!" they screamed. "The fires shall have him, and not you!"

He stood unmoved; a brawny giant flung himself across the flames, leaped up by the stone ledges, and made a lunge at the body of the spy. But Tricotrin was too rapid for him; he dealt the brigand one blow, straight *in his* chest, and the man fell like an ox under the pole-axe.

There was a moment's pause of stupefaction; they were superstitious of his power, they endowed him with more than mortal force. But the women, ever foremost in cruelty and riot, ever hounding on to war the men who might choose peace, mocked and mouthed at their males for cowardice, and yelled with shrillest oaths their horrible cry.

"Give him to the flames! His blood or yours!"

He looked with changeless calm upon them still; the hot flickering glare of the fire lighting up the majestic height of his stature, and the dauntless, scornful grandeur of his face, on which there stole a certain wistful saddened pity.

He had thought that these brutes loved him.

"Poor mad wild beasts!" he murmured. "You know not what it is you do. You can kill me, doubtless, if you will; but you cannot make me look on to see you steep yourselves in slaughter."

The roar hushed, like the roar of sea waves sinking down into calm: silence fell on them with a great and sudden awe. A sublimity that their minds could not reach stirred their souls from this serene courage, this offered sacrifice, this refusal to forsake them, though they forsook themselves. A gaunt, bull-throated, sanguinary, brutal brigand,—type of the *populares* of all time, from the mobs of Marius to the mobs of Marat,—thrust his knife down into his girdle with a curse.

"Let him have his way! He may thrust a pike through me and I will not say him no."

There was a throb of human blood under the bullock hide, there was a pulse of manly softness under the wolf skin. He was a butcher of men; he had drawn his knife across more than one panting throat; he lived by riot and pillage; but his temper answered to courage, and he had an instinct that reverenced greatness.

He was the leader among them, whose word was law, and whose argument with rebels was a rope: the crowd dared not revolt by more than a sullen savage groan. Tricotrin flung his bright glance over them.

"Patron Mi-Minoux, that was generously spoken. You give me this man?"

A roar of baffled rage broke from the throng, in which the loudest voices that led were the voices of women. But Mi-Minoux stayed it with a gesture.

"A thousand devils seize you! He deserves more than this from us," he shouted. "Tricotrin—take the damned beast's life: for your sake I say, not his, the hound!"

"For mine—and for your own."

He stretched out his hand to Mi-Minoux; the soilless hand that had never been stained with bribe or blood, or even the insincerity of a false greeting, meeting the one that was black with a thousand crimes, and red from murder's work. Over the Patron's dusky brutal face a tremor and a light passed quickly; he drew his own hand away as though it were burnt with fire.

"Hell and fury! *Mine* is not fit!"

Tricotrin looked on him with the smile that had such infinite pity.

"Chut! Why not? We are both men!"

Then, standing still on the stone ledge, with the drooping, huddled figure of the spy lying in a shapeless mass at his feet, while the bonfire burned dully in the rushing hail, while the flames and the wind sank together, and the people grew very quiet, hushing the children who cried aloud for the spectacle they had lost, his voice rang, clear and sweet as a bell, through the thieves' quarter,—

"Children! You give me, to-night, gifts more precious than silver and gold. I thank you from my soul. I would not barter this single life that you spare to me—vile though it be—for all the coins of monarchs' treasuries. You were wild beasts when I found you. Nay! a millionfold worse. For the beasts do but slaughter for hunger, as we kill the calf and the lamb; and the beasts never slay their own kind. You were worse than the tigers are; but still—my tigers were human. They let go their prey out of love for me. Ah! Why will ye not have as much love for yourselves? You are fools, though you deem yourselves wise: fools in the election of Crime for your god. Does that god bring you aught but blows? Will he feed you with aught but ashes? Will he clothe
aught but fear, and shame, and fever, and fire?
ols in the god that ye serve. Ye are slaves,

though ye deem yourselves free. What life does your deity give? To fear like wolves; to burrow like moles; to be hunted like foxes; to be shunned like lepers; to endure months of famine for sake of one hour's gorged and loathsome debauch, like the vultures that only find sweetness in carrion. To be netted at last like a fox in a gin; to have your limbs cramped in irons; to be fettered, scourged, shaven, yoked together like coupled hounds; working like the mill-horses for no reward in one endless circle; sleeping on a plank, growing old in a cell, without the chance of a hope, without a woman's kiss, or a man's laugh, without a draught of wine, or an hour of liberty:—that is the life your god gives you! That is the fate you deem freedom! How long will you worship so blindly?—so long as you are born in darkness; so long as you are begotten and bred and reared in ignorance and iniquity. You lay your children, new-born, in the red iron hands of your Moloch. You fill their mouths with curses ere yet their milk-teeth are shed. You snatch them from their mothers to send them out to your god's hideous service. You give them life, only that you may cause to be brought forth fresh spawn of sin to curse the world that you hate. You bring the young children your women have borne to see a man burn for their sport: if they kill you when you are old and useless, and cumber their path, will it be the children's fault or your own? Slaves yourselves, why will you bring the new lives into bondage ere yet they can tell what the liberty of innocence means? Fooled serfs of a false god, whom you worship because his altars glitter with the tinsel of vice, why will ye bind your offspring down beneath the tyranny of your vile religion? You think I use language too harsh? Oh, my people! You would have taken my life a moment since because I would not stand by to see you steeped afresh in blood; will you never believe how gladly I would lay it down for you if it would ransom you from suffering and sin?"

They were silent as they heard.

The passionate eloquence of the poet, winged with living truth, pierced their souls as he spoke to them.

Vaguely the meaning and the greatness of his words reached the dullest and vilest life that cowered there. Women, sexless and shameful, shuddered and beat their breasts that had nourished thieves, and cursed aloud their kisses that had rewarded murderers with kisses sold for stolen gold. Men, dogged and brutal, dropped down their heads, and shivered where they stood, and wondered in their poor untutored brains, that struggled against such mists of poisoned ignorance, whether indeed he who arraigned them thus were man or god.

It was only the little children who crouched beneath the flame pillars of the fire, who murmured in their baby-throats against him, because he had cheated them of the burning, and had not left them hear the music of the death-shriek.

He heard, and stooped, and raised up one of those who muttered in lisping revolt against him. The child was only a few years old; but from out its elfin eyes the thirst of inherited lust already glistened, and on its parching mouth the heat of the drunkard's desire was already set.

"Look!" he said to the silent people, while his eyes rested on them with a regard of tenderness and of compassion unutterable. "The child hungers for the sight of a death agony: your blood is in his veins, and he can have no choice but to be vile, for have you not made his pastime murder, and his cradle-song a curse? You have created him only to slay him,—are not the beasts of the desert holy and full of mercy beside you? Women—as these creatures come to the birth, it were better to tear them from your breasts, and dash their brains out upon the stones of your streets, than have them become like this. He is not a child—this thing that clamors to see a living creature burn. He is a budding seed of awful crime, to which your passions had dared to give the breath and force of life. And through him your sin will pass down through generation after generation. Have you ever thought what it is that you do when you beget these lives that grow up, like rank grass, from corruption?"

The great multitude was silent: even the hellish creature that had mouthed and mocked at his feet, was quiet and touched with awe, not knowing the meaning of the

words, but moved, unwittingly, by the solemn and dread sweetness of the voice above him.

Through the mob of murderers, and ravishers, and thieves, and forgers, a shiver ran like one deep sob.

Without another word he went down from the stones where he stood, and passed away through their midst, leading the condemned with him.

CHAPTER XLI.

CHRYSOSTOM, when he protected Eutropius under the shield of his eloquence, could not have had more disgust for the vileness of the one he had saved than had he now for the spy that he had rescued from the fire. Without asking he guessed his guilt; the guilt of a criminal turned informer, and chastised by those he had endeavored to betray.

At him, he had not even glanced; and the unhappy creature had not once lifted his aching lids, but moved on with trembling steps through the furious driving of the sleet and wind.

When at length they had reached a solitary place where none were in hearing, his protector loosened him, and faced him.

"If Iscariot had lived, he might have redeemed his crime. There is no sin that shuts out hope. What are you? and how came you there? It may be I can aid you."

Th traitor he had rescued looked up at him with blank scorched eyes, that still saw nothing save the glare and ebb of the flames from which he had escaped.

Tricotrin scanned his face; and his own changed. He stood motionless, looking on the charred, shrinking, half-naked form before him.

"Again!" he murmured. "Again!"

The other did not hear or note him; feeling, beholding,

listening to naught save that roar and leap of the bonfires which seemed still winding around his limbs, and crushing his breath with their clouds of smoke. Of his rescue he was scarcely conscious; he had followed the hand that had guided him, by a dumb instinct: he was senseless and paralyzed with the past fear; he was like a moth caught by some gentle hand from out a flame, and loosed, maimed and blinded, upon the darkness and coldness of the night.

"Again!" murmured Tricotrin; "how vile we are at our best! If I had known I might have left him to his fate!"

All the light, and the pity, and the sublimity that had been upon his face when he had addressed the multitudes, and driven them back from slaughter, had faded; it was dark, and gray, and weary, the fatigue of rising passions, and the despair of a soul that could not reach the heights it strove for, following the inspiration and the tenderness and the strength that had been on it as he had arraigned the murderers.

He uttered not one word, but stood gazing down upon the blackened, quivering, helpless thing, whose life would have gone forth in fire but for him.

They were alone: dark leaning roofs of empty buildings rose upon either side, like the steep slopes of caving cliffs; the winds shrieked through the narrow passages; the sky above was leaden and starless. The creature, looking upward,—with his sight still dazzled, and hot as with the horrible scorch of the flame upon it, and with his brain still maddened from terror,—caught the eyes that rested on him, and knew them, and trembled, and covered his face with his bruised, bleeding hands, and cried out that the dead had arisen.

Above him, like the Saint Michael of Guido, stood the form of his savior; the shadows changing on his face, fiery, fleeting, lightened, darkened, swift and varying as the thoughts at conflict in his heart.

On the earth, the Greek, Canaris, writhed senseless; shuddering in epilepsy, foaming at the mouth, beating the air with frantic gesture, struck down, as by a stroke from some avenging angel, by the gaze that had looked at him with the look of the dead.

The night had grown still more inclement. The pattering hail had changed to a storm of rain, whose great drops froze as swiftly as they fell. The air was ice; the winds were hurricanes; the cold was growing with every instant more intense. Left upon the frozen ground, half nude, convulsed, insensible, the wretched creature lying there must have perished no less surely than had the flames consumed him.

He was beyond the pale of human kinship, beyond the right of human pity,—a traitor who had turned against his comrades, and striven to betray them to the law, so that his own wretched life should be, by the law, set free.

To the man who looked on him, he was yet more than this; he was a foe whose poisoned fangs had bitten deep into the frank, free faith of boyhood.

Yet, with the same mercy as he would have raised a dying, leprous-eaten wretch, Tricotrin lifted up the criminal from the earth, and passed onward.

"Doing otherwise—how were I better than they?" he thought.

From the active deed of murder he had that hour withheld the people. It was not for him, whose lips had spoken their rebuke, to yield himself up to the instincts of their vengeance. He went on through the ice-storm, over the whitened, frozen ground, heavily cumbered with the convulsed limbs and twisting body of the unconscious burden that he carried.

Once, ere this, he had given this man the "chance" that he had coveted; and out of that chance he found to-night that the lost wretch had coined only deeper crime, viler ruin, lower degradation. Yet, he gave him still another. The baser, the weaker, the guiltier this life, the more need was there that it should have breath and space left to change and become cleansed if such amend were possible.

There was nothing stirring in the howling winter night that already trenched on dawn: he met none to aid him in his errand; the only sound was the steps of the half-frozen patrol some way from him, and the soldier he could not summon. To give up this thing, that lay insensible and rigid across his shoulder, to the hands of the law was not the reading of duty that he followed.

Painfully, and by slow degrees, he toiled on through the beating storm that turned to ice as it fell upon his face and form. At length he reached the gaunt walls of the nearest hospital, with its lamp burning over the entrance-way, the flame dashed to and fro by the fierce eddies of the gusts that shook its iron cage and blew the ice-rain past it in white clouds.

He knew the religious refuge well: as one of those few places upon earth where to suffer is deemed sufficient passport into pity, and where no other title of admission is required than the canker of disease and the woes of necessity.

He rang; the great bell boomed mournfully through the stillness. He leaned the figure of the man against the porch, and gazed on it with an infinite pain in his eyes. It was huddled together, sunk in the swoon that had succeeded the convulsion, helpless, pitiful, miserable beyond all words.

"Had you been true in the years of our youth, how would it have been with us both now?" he thought;—and all the strange, wild, cruel dreams, which rise with the memory of a fate that has been within our grasp, and has been seized from it, and broken asunder, and cast into the abyss of irrevocable losses, arose before him as he stood outside the walls of the hospital with the senseless body stretched in the gray shadow at his feet.

The boom of the bell died on the silence. The iron door slowly unclosed. He was familiar there; and the Brethren were wont to call him, in the bitterness of winters such as this, their Alpine dog, their St. Bernard of search and of succor.

"I brought him from the thieves' quarter. He is not dead," he said, briefly.

They took the ghastly burden within, to where were warmth, and science, and care, and rest; and he turned and went backward into the storm, refusing to enter there.

He was not conscious of the violence of the winds, or of the perilous ice-blasts of the rain. His memory was with the past; he wondered how it would have been with him had one lie from the lips of that dying wretch not changed the current of his life in boyhood—one act of

baseness from the traitor, who had come at last to the burning play of the thieves' awful mirth, not driven him in youth to exile.

Greatness, and power, and the treasuries of wealth, would have been his. The laurels of fame would have filled his hands in lieu of the wild flowers of gipsy wandering. His pleasures would have been taken in palaces instead of under the tawny roofs of fishers'-cabins, of village-hostelries, of painters' sketching-tents. His wine would have been poured from chalices of gold or silver in place of the drinking-horns of careless artists, and the brown jugs of bright-eyed maidens. His name would have been on the lips of the world instead of in the hearts of the people; and honor would have blown loud clarions in his path where love now laughed in his eyes and song now rang on his ear.

Regret had never touched him.

Those heights which he had left, had ever looked to the gaze that was bold and true as the eagle's, only as the sand mounds which the children of the world held in their ignorance to be golden thrones.

The diadem which he had laid down had ever seemed to the forehead that was warm with the suns of the south, and proud with an unstained truth, and caressed with the sweet lips of women, but a leaden fardel of weary weight, that men only bare because fools called it a crown.

The ambitions that he had forsaken had ever appeared to the mind that was steeped in the colors of the poet, in the passions of the lover, in the indolence of the wanderer, in the gayety of the reveler, but as ropes of sand, whereby those who deemed that they climbed to the stars fell back into the pit of oblivion.

He would not have exchanged his life for a kingdom; and envy of those whom men called great had never left its evil breath upon him. He knew too well the penalties that make the air in which such men soar so arid, and drench so weightily with the dank dews of satiety the wings of all those who fly on high.

Regret had never touched him.

Never—until this night when he had beheld the violets he had given in the white breast of a woman.

CHAPTER XLII.

Lost in deep thought he noted nothing as he moved homeward from the hospital, until in one of the lonelier passages his eyes were drawn to a dark strange figure coming through the drifting snow, that froze as fast as it fell; wandering with a dreamy uncertainty in the gait, yet advancing with a curious resolve and swiftness. The man was dressed in heavy blue fisher's clothes, his beard was very long and rough, and blew in the strong wind, his eyes gazed out into the darkness, painfully bright and yet unutterably weary.

Tricotrin had seen that same form oftentimes since he had seen it first under the tawny sail of the Loirais hay-boat. In dark, quaint, old-world nooks of man-forgotten towns; in the hot yellow glare of southern cities at noon; on the olive-shadowed roads of the Riviera; in the great brown cumbrous barges, on rivers crowded with summer-soil; in the deep glow of cool, dim, silent churches with the amber shadows and the yellow lights sleeping on their noiseless footways: seen it ever in the same wandering quest, ever in the same mute solitude.

His voice rang through the frosty air: "Bruno?"

The sailor paused, and looked around, with a vague memory in his eyes: in a certain sense he had grown to recognize that voice better than any other's, though he would glide away from all companionship, and suffer no pursuit He knew it, something as the dog, whose heart is in his own dead master's grave, will know a voice that ever speaks tenderly to him, and never seeks to draw him away from the tomb.

Tricotrin laid one hand on his shoulder.

"You have not found her?" he had learned that it was more merciful to treat the delusion as a truth.

The sailor's eyes turned on him with a look as bewildered and as utterly heart-broken as the eyes of the dog at the grave of his master.

"Not yet. It is long;—it is long!"

A great sigh shook him as he spoke. It was long;—it was over twenty years.

"The years pass swiftly," Tricotrin answered him with the grave gentleness which had won him something like trust and love even from this poor, hunted, stupefied mind. "The years bring us age. May it not be she is dead?"

"No. That is not possible. If she were dead her soul would come to me."

Bruno's eyes were bright with this strange faith which lived in him and could not be stirred; this faith which was the tempest-tossed relic of that barbaric creed of his childhood, which drew his tired steps to the altars of the churches in a vague worship, half superstition, half heart-sickness.

Tricotrin looked on him in silence; what words would allay this hopeless grief, or dull this endless loss? Her soul!—the soul of that soulless thing who had but senses and passions, and who had no god but the gods of gold and of lust!

"I thought I saw her—look you!" whispered Bruno, suddenly, while his voice sank very low. "Last night,—a few hours agone,—I came on a place where the men and the women dance on the ice, and the torches burn, and the sledge bells ring, and the great trees are all alive with fire and silver. You call it the wood of Boulogne? Well,—I thought that I saw her. Through a casement, in that wooden house on the lake, where the lights glitter all night, where the devil sits laughing to see men do his work. It was her face!—it was among many; they were shouting, and singing, and pouring red wine down their throats, and the face turned and looked at me with her eyes—oh, yes!—with her eyes. But do you know what looked through them?—*a devil.* Through her eyes he jibed me, and mocked me, and vaunted his vice and his lusts. Then I knew that Satanus had bade him take her likeness to tempt and to torture me. And I had strength to flee; I fled all night through the woods, through the darkness, through the ice and the snow. Will it be so

in hell? Will they curse us by putting their vileness in the shapes we know purest and loveliest?"

He paused abruptly; the man who heard him stood silent, touched with a pity beyond all words.

The devil the forsaken husband had beheld had been the woman whom he believed pure and unsoiled as the snow that fell round them!

"Come with me, Bruno," he said softly. "Come with me if for to-night only; you are cold, and fevered, and worn out; you are ill, though you know it not. Come!"

The sailor shook his head; with the dogged dreamy resolve settling over his gaze.

"I am not ill. And I must seek her."

"But you have sought her so long?"

"Yes. It is long—how long! I cannot count. But that is no matter, you know; when I find her we shall forget that. I must not rest. I would not sleep; but that sleep comes on me at last and kills me, body and brain. I never sleep but just at the dawn. I cannot tell why, but I feel she is in less peril when the sun first breaks. All things are waking, and they are merciful,—the beasts and the birds. There is mercy in their eyes that no men have,—but you; and they suffer: that makes them pitiful!"

He paused once more; the strange, wild, tender thoughts straying through the chaos of his shattered reason.

"Come!" urged Tricotrin gently. "We will seek her together?"

But Bruno drew away.

"No—no—no," he said absently. "I must be alone; always alone. You see;—we do not know where she is; she may be ill, and desolate, or a beggar mayhap; she must be like a stray lamb on a bleak mountain side, alone, in the width of the world. And you know the lamb will only come to the shepherd's voice; another's scares her. And something tells me I am near to her now: the end will soon come."

There was a light like the pale radiance from stars upon his brown attenuated features; but the stars were *not* shining, the sky above-head was black with leaden

snow-burdened clouds: the light was the light of a martyr's hope; holy, pure, divine.

He moved swiftly away, with a backward gesture of the hand, mournful, appealing, commanding, that entreated not to be followed, and that could not be disobeyed. His footsteps fell silent on the softness of the snow; his form glided away like a wraith, soon lost in the hush and the gloom.

Tricotrin stood long and looked back at the vault of darkness into which he had passed.

"Twenty-four years!" he thought. "And he has never wearied! What is my bitterness beside his?"

Then he went onward, back to the gayer quarters of the town; and, as he went, he passed the open portals of a world-famous theater. The flood of gaslight streamed out upon the dazzling snow; the audience poured out with it, in a flood of glowing color; the throng was full of laughter, and all their voices were singing snatches of a new mirthful carol of Auber, heard within that night for the first time, and bright as the wines and the loves that it chanted.

"How she sang, how she acted, how she danced!" shouted a student. "She is as lovely as ever she was,—is Coriolis!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Love! Love! always of love!—how tired I am of it!" she thought, casting aside the latest of the many letters that vainly wooed to new nuptials the Duchess de Lirà.

A poet dying in a garret, a revolutionist pining in a dungeon, a man heart-sick with foiled ambition, a woman scourged from the world's pleasures by the world's opprobrium, a wife with no sphere save the narrow space that her hearth-fire lit—these might need it, these might glorify it. But she!—What had she to do with this comrade of beggars, this consoler of transgressors? It was an incense

that perfumed her path, a wreath that her foot trod in passing, a passion-flower that was twisted among the gold and gems of her diadem:—no more. What cause had she to stoop and share a thing so common, and so commonplace, that touched the lips of gipsy-girls, and smiled from the eyes of artists' mistresses, and sang its songs under cottage eaves, and made fair the dreams of toil-worn peasants? This tale told so continuously on her ear, grew very wearisome: it was a melodious monotone, but its changeless monotone was tiresome.

Love had indeed done all things for her. It had been around her all her life: her servitor who ministered uncomplainingly to all caprices, her treasure-house from which she drew what she would, her wishing-ring whereby all the powers and joys of an exceeding greatness had become hers, and overborne the accident that had cast her, a bastard or a changeling, upon fate. But she held it in gay, languid, light contempt. It was a thing so easily won with a careless smile, it was so easy to retain by an indolent word, it was a spaniel so fawning and faithful under blows as under caresses—in fine, it was such a fool, that she held it in scorn, like all things cheaply purchased; and although it was her one great creditor, without which she had been bankrupt and a prisoner in the jail of bitter circumstance and hard destitution, she scarcely gave it a grateful memory, never a reverential thought.

She esteemed it, as his mistress,—beautiful, callous, exacting, avaricious, contemptuous,—will esteem the man who gives her all she has, and is content with all her wayward moods, and adores her so blindly that he never perceives that he is only her tool, her purse, her dupe! To need love one must need sympathy. Sympathy was indifferent to her: she was perfectly successful, and success is sufficient for itself.

The lying murmurs of the slanderous world had attributed many loves to this woman, so magnificent, so young, so seductive, so tempted, so negligent of her lord, and so early widowed. But that world was at fault as its conclusions most often are: she had never loved. She only loved—herself: and so fair was the sovereign whom her

mirrors displayed to her that she had never once felt inclined to change the allegiance. In one sense, indeed, she had loved the man whom she had voluntarily forsaken: loved him with a fondness and a strength she had never otherwise known; but that affection had never been strong enough to combat the sunny selfishness in her; and for several years it had been so commingled with self-reproach, distasteful humiliation, remorse, and the consciousness of ingratitude, that she had grown to thrust it away from her as often as it moved her.

She was dreamily but entirely content where she reclined, with the fire and the wax-light playing on her: they who are thus, but seldom recur to the past. The fruit we have eaten is only sweet in its recollection when that which our hand holds is bitter and rotten, and on the boughs of our orchard there is no blossom that promises fresh wealth for the spring.

She had so many things of which to think. Past scenes of triumph in gorgeous old palaces of Vienna and of Rome; present days of empire in this peerless Paris where she reigned. Treasures of art, and of beauty; of the looms of India and the jewels of Asia; of painter and poet and musician; of land and water and castle-crowned landscape, that were all inalienably hers. Caprices which, if she had them to-night, would become the fashion to-morrow. Ambitions for rule, for dominance, for the celebrity of the State as well as of the salon, which were sufficient to give zest and pleasure to the passing of life with the aroma of some one thing attainable though as yet unattained. All these floated in gorgeous hues through her thoughts; as, when she had been a child, had done the tales of the fairies when she had watched a flock of blue-warblers flash in azure through the sunshine.

She had youth, she had wealth, she had power, and dominion, and freedom, and success: what room could there be for remembrance of a long-buried time when she had been nameless, and homeless, and motherless, and friendless also, save for one friend who never begrudged, never reproached, never wearied.

Once, in the allurement that the actress possessed for

her, he had dreaded for her with a terrible fear the life of temptation, of seduction, of diamond-crowned evil, of those women whose loveliness is as the curling snake which clings but to destroy, and whose sweetness is as the poisoned honey culled from the brilliancy of African flowers. If she had gone to it;—gone through its glittering portals to its bitter end, and known shame and starvation, and the painted misery that shrinks even from the pitiful eyes of the street-dog;—she would have remembered better far, and the days of her childhood would have been to her even as a paradise whose closed gates were guarded by a flaming sword, and whose light would have looked as the light of eternal suns that could never again stream on her. In her wretchedness and desolation he would have been remembered and avenged,—in her joy he had no place.

Beside these letters of the passion which she mocked, she had much correspondence to glance through where she sat in her dressing-chamber resting for a half hour, ere she should attire herself for a costume-ball at one of the embassies:—from the last of such entertainments she had been summoned to find a husband lying dead in his great Roman palace whose latest word had been, "do not spoil her pleasure."

But of this she did not think.

One letter she perused a little more earnestly than she did those of honeyed flattery, or eager worship; it was from her steward at her château in the south. It was full of humble apology and regret at having been unable to execute her most august commands.

"Unable to make my theater in the south court!" she murmured aloud, as she read. "Intolerable!" If he cannot obey me in the possible, and the impossible, I will displace him with some one who will."

A line farther down caught her sight: she saw that the command he herein referred to was touching, not the new theater for her autumnal gathering, but the old truffle-hunter, Aubin Ralcor. The steward wrote that he had been found dead on his bed of leaves that morning; the steward regretted that death should have been *so* discourteous as to precede and prevent madame's

wishes: but death was such a democrat—it would not even respect madame's orders. The steward proceeded to say that the theater in the south court should assuredly be ready in the autumn, as madame desired: death could not interfere in this case, for if it carried off a workman, he would with ease be supplied:—Providence was bountiful and made laborers invariably in excess of work.

"Poor old man,—it is a pity!" she thought. "But I am glad the theater is sure to be ready,—there are glass-houses by millions, but no one has had a glass theater. It will illuminate so well, and sparkle all over like a crystal."

She cast his letter after the others, and went to the appareling of her charms, on which she expended so many hours of her time, so many seasons of her meditation, in the same pleasure with which she had gazed at the necklet of the Prince Fainéant when all the little, chirping, waking birds beneath the eaves had seemed to tell her there was naught so fair as she on earth.

Princes and nobles told her that sweet story now: but it had lost little of the charm it had possessed in the swallows' first telling.

She was neither ignorant nor of slight intellect, as most vain women are; she had alike intelligence and wit of an unusual keenness, but she was for all that the vainest of all living things. She adored herself; she delighted in that exquisite face of hers to which she owed all her captivity of the world; she would draw the heavy burnished gold of her tresses through her hands; she would turn her head over her shoulder and glance at herself, Narcissus-like; she would gaze into the slumbrous night-like depths of her eyes, with a never-ceasing pride and rejoicing in her own loveliness.

Painters and sculptors had reproduced it in every manifold phase; but it was the one thing of which she never wearied:—the only thing.

And she required it this night to be at its utmost height; she desired it to be beyond even its accustomed measure: she wanted it to dazzle, enchain, subdue, appeal, inflame, astonish, and subjugate at once, and in even an unwonted force. For—this night alone for the first time—

she knew that she would meet the man who, looking at her on the grape wagon of the harvest-feast, had said,

"She cannot be of the people!"

She had never met him hitherto, although the repute of his fame had often come to her. Those who had guarded her life had avoided him, not allowing her to divine any intent or perceive any purpose in their so doing. She had been little in her own country, not at all in his; and for several years he had been absent in the gilded exile of a great state duty, that he had accepted and executed in onerous service to his nation.

But she had remembered him with a curious tenacity of remembrance, in a creature so prone to swiftest oblivion of all things. She had listened with eagerness to whatever rumor had said of him, playing with his name as it will ever do with names once made of mark. She had often wished, with a curious mingling of fear and of desire, that he should return from his rule in the East, and cross her path once more.

She had no fear that recognition of her would ever awake in him. She was too utterly changed; even if it had been possible that any memory of a child seen once on a summer evening could remain with a man who was occupied with the full, earnest, arduous and lofty career of a statesman and diplomatist.

But she knew that she herself could never entirely banish the remembrance of how he had seen her; of how she had wandered through his picture-galleries, a nameless child; of how she had sat in his farm-servants' dairy chambers, and eaten of their honey and their bread, like any cowherd's daughter.

She knew that she could never wholly forget this; and the remembrance was acute suffering to her.

She would go into his presence the sovereign of his world, his equal, nay, his superior in rank, a beautiful, haughty, courted, idolized woman: and she would always remember that if only one of the lowest laborers on his land could recognize her and tell him the simple truth, he would know that in all her omnipotence and with all her attainments she was little better after all than a living lie to the world that adored her.

They had never met; they were to meet this night. And for that cause she aspired to make her beauty look even more than mortal, and for the sole time since she had seen her child's face mirrored in the brown depths of the Loire, was tempted to be almost discontented with that gracious and prodigal gift, and to desire that it should even be something yet more splendid than it was.

Why did she want this?—she could not have told. He would not know—never could know—that when he should look upon her now he should see the same features that he had once praised when he had ridden at evening among the vine-fields of his own lands. But *she* knew:—and she wanted to come with all the glory and magnificence of an empress before the man who had seen her last as a peasant child upon a vintage-wagon.

Proud as she was, Viva's was only half the pride of the born patrician; the other half was the pride of the Pompadours, of the Cabarus, of the Theodosias, who have sprung from the darkness of obscurity into the blaze of power. Her rank had grown as natural to her as it is to any legitimate sovereign; yet it was perpetually marvelous to her as it never can be to those who have enjoyed possession and dignity from their birth upward.

In one of the reception-chambers of the palace to which she went that night, a knot of those who guide the destinies of nations were standing conversing, at the moment of her entrance.

One of them leaned his arm on an ebony cabinet, and was turned slightly away from the brilliancy of the thronged rooms. He was of lofty and slender stature; very fair, with a grave, passionless beauty of feature, and an exceeding serenity and pride of bearing: a man to be singled out by the most careless spectator, whether in the press of a street crowd or the glitter of a throne-room,—a man who bore all the impress of one who had played a high part, and held a high name among the world's rulers.

The ministers speaking with him paused and broke off their discourse, and glanced through the rooms.

"There she is," said one of them. "Did you ever see a magnificent a *creature?*"

"I cannot tell. Her beauty remains only a rumor to me."

"What! You have never met her?"

"Never. I have heard so much of her that I have, I confess, somewhat avoided this marvel, the catalogue of whose charms has so often wearied me, and whose caprices I have known to interfere with the most serious deliberations."

"You are prejudiced. Wait until you have seen this sorceress. You do not know until then how beautiful a woman can be."

"Surely? I have seen so many beautiful women."

He spoke with a smile, but with a certain incredulous indifference to the subject which he was too courteous to express. Also, it was true that he had avoided, at such times as he had been near her presence, this woman of whom they spoke. He had heard nothing of her that attracted him; much that repelled. Her coquetry, her coldness, her neglect of her husband, her imperious volatile caprices, her wayward exercise of her wide power, her absolute abandonment to the utmost extravagance of pleasure: all these repulsed his taste in women.

"You are skeptical," said one of the statesmen beside him. "Look there, then—and believe."

He turned his head, and looked as they bade him.

Among the brilliant throng he saw her, diamond-crowned, diamond-winged, with a troop of little children of the highest races in the land playing before her and behind her as elves and fairies, as Pucks, Peas-blossoms, Cobwebs, and all the joyous band of Oberon, scattering lilies and laburnums, carnations and camellias in her path. It was summer still for her and them, though out in the streets an aged woman froze to death in an archway, from snow and from starvation.

"She is beautiful, indeed!" said Estmere, under his breath. At that moment she passed close by him, in the midst of her laughing cherubic fairies,—and their glances met.

She saw once more the blue, tranquil, thoughtful eyes that she had likened in her childhood to those of Arthur *of England*—eyes that she had never forgotten. And in

her own there came a look of recognition, over her face passed a flush of surprise, of pleasure, and of apprehension all commingled. The look was gone, the warmth was faded, almost as soon as they had come, but he had caught them,—he who, to his own knowledge, never had beheld her. Others saw them also, and thought,—"Is it true that they have never met before?"

She floated past him in all the magnificence of her pageant: he never dreamed that, once ere then, looking at her when she had sat crowned with grape-leaves by the peasantry upon his lands, he had said of her—"*She* cannot be of the people."

The air of the world she dwelt in transfigures like the breath of the frost, and changes the wild-flower spray as though by magic into a glittering, chill, exquisite thing, dazzling as diamonds. But is the flower's fragrance any longer left?

Awhile later, and his presentation to her was offered in such fashion that he had no power left for the discourtesy of refusal: and as he bent before her and spoke in the melodious chill tones that she still remembered, she could not, with all her self-command, retain the perfect calm and negligence of her accustomed manner. And he, a man far too high-souled for vanity, and far too wearied to seek for conquest, wondered to himself what interest he could possess for this patrician coquette, to whom he was wholly a stranger.

He lingered a very brief while beside her; and passed onward, resigning his place to her more eager courtiers: for the first time she had failed to see admiration in the glance that had fallen on her, for the first time a chilliness of disappointed expectation touched her.

"The instinct of my childhood was a just one: he alone looks 'great,'" she thought, and in her soul she felt with bitterness, "And he alone sees no beauty in me!"

She often looked for him that night, but she saw him no more. He had quitted the palace very early.

"Is she not perfect?" one of his acquaintance had asked him that night

Estmere had answered, "No."

"No! What does she lack, then?"

"Feeling. That woman lives only for herself."

And day after day, night after night, they met thus: and he greeted her and avoided her thus, with that ceremonious courtesy which is chillier than any rudeness or bitterness. Seeing him continually she yet saw nothing of him. If he had any sentiment toward her, it was aversion rather than homage; yet, from the high-bred serenity of his habitual manner, she could not extract so much flattery as would have even been found in censure or in insolence. He simply neglected her: keener affront, harder offense, there could scarcely have been against her.

The exception of this one man from her subjugation moved her to more interest in him than she ever felt for any of those who had been fooled by her glance and made wretched by her word. Although she, from a certain lofty pride in her, had been utterly untouched by any of the passion she inspired, she had never restrained herself from the fullest exercise of her sway over men's souls; she had never forborne from using the power that her beauty bestowed on her, using it with the uttermost witchery and enhancement that were possible. She had seen the extremes of passion, of devotion, of despair: she had studied the natures of her many lovers, till she had gained as deep an insight into their weakness as Coriolis herself could have attained. And Estmere alone escaped her,—the only man whom she had been tempted to meet with interest, to treat with reverence!

Nor could she have her vengeance for his neglect by mockery of him, by disdain for him. He was as far removed from her satire as he was from her seductions. There was that about him which hushed the vengeful ironies that rose to her lips. He had an influence over her that she could not resist, even while his studious avoidance of her most deeply incensed and mortified her.

He was "great," as her childish fancy had felt. Not by rank, or wealth, or honor, in which very many of her present world could far excel, and almost all could equal, him; but by the force of natural character, which gave an unstudied greatness to all his thoughts, motives, and actions; which lent a perfect and harmonious repose to

his slightest words and movements; which rendered everything that was unworthy, insincere, untrue, or exaggerated, impossible to him; and which made base things show their baseness, lying lips halt in their falsehood, and unreal pretensions sink to their due insignificance before him. He was a statesman, an orator, a leader; and was great in all these; but greater in nothing than in the dignity and simplicity of his life, public and private: just, sincere, incapable of time-service, indifferent to every splendid bribe, gentle of temper, if severe in judgment, he won the reverence of all who came near his influence, and was honored even by the foes who resented the proud silence of his temperament and the patrician tenets of his code.

And it was precisely this character which attracted the mutinous, brilliant, uncertain, and imperious nature of this capricious and wayward woman. She was in her sweetest moods when he was near; she gave him her gayest wit, her airiest grace, her fairest smiles, and her most dazzling radiance;—all in vain.

Not the coldest word of admiration ever passed his lips to her; and she never once could change the calm, passionless, grave regard of the deep-blue meditative eyes that were like the eyes of the Roman Augustus.

CHAPTER XLIV.

In a miserable garret in the Quarter of the Odéon, a boy of eighteen lay on his little truckle-bed, prostrate with ague and with fever.

Although the winter had stolen into earliest spring, the weather was still bitter, and full of snow and ice, and sweeping northern winds. The youth suffered greatly. He was an art-student; the seventh son of a poor widowed woman, who kept a wretched wine and tobacco shop in the extreme east of France. He could have had no help from her if he had asked for it, and he was too

proud and too tender of heart to ask, choosing rather to perish in this Paris, that had been the Eden of his desires, than to take one copper fraction from that scanty store of his helpless mother. He dreamed divine dreams of his own future, of the honors he would win, of the medals he would bear off, of the pictures he would paint, of the prize he would earn that would send him to study amid the greatness of Rome; and, meantime, he ornamented sweetmeat-boxes, as a means of livelihood in such days as his tertian ague left him free, and endured the daily agonies that killed Gilbert and Hegisippe Moreau, and still kill their kind—lads that an imperial nation has no time to count.

He was very ill, very miserable, very lonely; he was of a shy and silent temper, and had made no friends. His last coin was gone; he was too tortured by his disease to work. He thought he should die, and die alone. And at eighteen both death and solitude are hard.

He was glad to hear a knock at his door—glad even though it were but his landlord, to whom he owed rent, come again to curse him for a sickly beggar. When he saw who it was that entered, his hollow eyes lightened with an exceeding joy.

"It is you!" he said, softly, with a sigh of infinite content and gratitude.

His visitant came up to him, and smiled, and spoke pleasant, soothing, cheerful words, and let a little black monkey leap out of his arms and play her antics on the pallet till they brought a wan laughter on to the boy's white cracked lips. Then he thrust some billets of wood that he had brought under his arm into the empty stove, and set light to them, and flung open the lattice for the cold but crisp air to enter; he poured some rich wine out of a flask he had in his pocket into a tin pot, and heated it when the wood had caught flame; he gave it to the lad upon the bed, with spices simmering in it, and a fresh roll of white flour to eat with it. Finally, he sat himself down beside the one little deal table, on which the brushes, and colors, and boxes waiting for ornamentation stood, and drew one of the sweetmeat-trunks to him, and *began* to paint on it, and gild its sides, and make it gay

with flowers and fruits and birds, expending on it all the fair conceits of a luxuriant fancy.

The youth lay still and watched him with all the gratitude he was too weak to utter in speech.

Seven times in two weeks had his savior come thus; and restored life to him; had done his labor for him; and brought him the coins of his wage; had silenced the wrath and the complaints of the landlord; and spoken of the coming spring, and of the healing it would bear upon its wings. Spoken, too, of a cottage that he knew in the village of Barbizan, where, for a trifle a week, a lad might be housed and fed, and watch the great painters in their holiday, and have around him all the sweetness of the forest air, and see the primroses bud forth from among the moss, and the rabbits steal among the fern, and the tender leaves of the oaks unfold in the bright young year.

And when he had tried to thank him, and to ask him who he was and whence he came, his redeemer had laughed a little, and answered only:

"Tut!—I am Tricotrin."

And the boy, though but a new-comer into the city, had known all that the name spoke; and had asked no more.

His friend sat there through half the day, painting the lids of the boxes, wasting on them a hundred delicate graces, a hundred grotesque fancies, a hundred forms of loveliness and picturesqueness: because when genius abides in a man it will never let him do aught ill, but will ever thrust itself out in any work of his hand, be it of the simplest or the slightest.

He was only painting on sugar-boxes that would be sold for tenpence a piece. But the creative power in him called beauty into these common things, and he sketched on them as a king's painter sketches on a palace-cornice.

Twice or thrice he paused to give some food or some wine to the lad. Sometimes he went on with his labor in unbroken silence. Sometimes he called boyish laughter on to the youth's pale lips by gay drolleries of story or airy vagaries of wit. Sometimes he spoke—and this was oftenest—of that little nest in Barbizan, where so soon the breath of the spring would be bringing the birds from their nests, the foliage from the boughs, the roses

from the briars, the wild hyacinths from the grass; and where he said that the boy should go.

Then, when he had done all the work that was there, he bade the lad a cheerful good night; left him with a big jug of milk beside him to ease his thirst; piled more wood on the stove; and went carrying the boxes with him, that he might get the payment for them, and put it in the hands of the landlord, who had sworn that if the rent went unpaid the youth should be turned out in the street.

As he went down the stairs a child met him, sent from the house that he dwelt in, with a letter received in his absence.

His face changed color as he broke the seal and read the one line within it—it was simply:

"Can you come to me during the day?"

He knew in whose handwriting that brief summons was penned—knew it, without the armorial bearings and the cipher that decorated the glossy sheet.

A thrill of hot delight ran through him. His heart beat quickly and joyously; his eyes flashed and lightened with pleasure.

She had not wholly forgotten!

He watched her life; but he scarce ever went into her presence. He had accepted oblivion, and he was too proud to assert a claim that she had forgotten. She was happy,—he let her be. If ever the time came when she knew what grief was, he would then go to her, not before.

But with her summons fresh joy flashed through him. He did not pause to speculate, to wonder, to doubt; he only cared for the fact that once more he had become a desire and a necessity in her life.

He did the duty to which he had pledged himself first. He turned down the street in which the bonbon box-maker dwelt, sold his merchandise, received a gold piece in exchange, and appeased with it the landlord's avaricious greed. Then he was free; and went with the swiftness of a greyhound whither she had called him.

His pulses were throbbing and his brain was dizzy as he was ushered into her presence. He did not know *what* he hoped, yet hope was strong in him. He gave

joy away so often, with such lavish hands, to others, it could not seem strange to him one day that gift might be returned back into his own breast.

"You sent for me?" he asked, eagerly, with that radiance still on his face, as he approached her.

She turned to him with the instinctive coquetry of her nature.

"You never come to see me unless I do!"

The reproach was very sweet to him; the tone was like the accent of her early years.

"Why do I not?" he said, gently. "It is because such women as you do not have one want left for those who can only bring them love to fill up. You know too well that if you ever thought of me——"

He paused abruptly; in his code the one who stood as creditor for an unpaid debt of gratitude must never urge a claim forgotten by the debtor. Moreover, he who had loved her all her life through was too proud to speak to her of a love she had chosen to cast away, undesired, unrecalled.

"I do often think of you," she murmured, hurriedly. "Can you deem me so dead to all feeling? You! who were all the world to me once!"

"There is no need to remember that. Others have done much greater things for you since. But is there any service I can render you now?"

The unintentional reproach which lay in the inference that she must have some need of him or she would not have remembered him, escaped her.

"Service?—no," she answered, with a tinge of embarrassment. "Do you recollect Lord Estmere?"

He started, and moved slightly away; all the glow, and light, and warmth died from off his face; his eyes, which had dwelt on her with such gladness and such fondness, lost their radiance.

"Is it of him you desire to speak to me?"

"I have seen him again, that is all," she answered indifferently, conscious how insufficient must seem the cause for the action. "And—if I remember rightly, you seemed to know much of him. Is it so?"

"I know of him—yes."

"Then—do you know anything of him that the world does not?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Why?" she said, impatiently, while, in her own despite, a flush of shame for the interest she had allowed herself to show for a man who gave her no homage and no admiration, passed quickly over her face. "It seemed strange to meet him in the world—that is all."

"You fear his recognition?"

"Oh, no! What have *I* in common with the child crowned in that village-wagon!" she interrupted him with capricious impatience, forgetful of the cruelty to him that lay in the scornful sentence. "I was only curious to hear anything you could tell me of him; because——"

"He interests you?"

She laughed with careless, contemptuous indifference; but he saw that her eyes fell, and that the flush was still on her face.

"Interest! I think nothing interests me,—except new diamonds! I mean, because,—I imagined, you must some time or other have come in contact with him. Was I right?"

"Lord Estmere and I are total strangers."

"Do you think any ill of him?"

"I believe him to be one of the noblest and most high-souled men on earth."

The answer was sincere, and given in the purity of truth; but it went hard with him, for all that, to give it utterance.

She looked at him silently a moment; swift in penetration, when she was not too careless to exercise the power, she saw that there was something withheld from her.

"Then—do you know anything of his life that the world does not?"

"Of his life? Nothing."

"There was some terrible story of his wife, was there not?"

"She was false to him—yes. The story is known to the whole world. She was a high-born woman, an exceedingly beautiful woman, and as sensual and as vile as *any* courtesan, at soul. He wedded her when he was but

a youth; he adored her, I believe; and she—lived with him a few years only to dishonor his name forever for sake of a Greek slave in their household!'

"A Greek slave!"

"Well—with the nature and the vices of a slave; cowardly, timorous, false, and vengeful. The creature had owed all to Estmere's race,—a handsome boy of Athens, made first page and then secretary; an Adonis, pampered and caressed for his girlish loveliness; a graceful hound that first fawned and then bit! That was the paramour for whom Eustace Estmere was abandoned;—abandoned, I say! The sin was not half so openly sinned. It was the old tale of treachery and dishonor which did not hesitate to taint his own hearthstone!"

"But she is divorced from him?"

"Of course! But do you think that such a stain can ever leave a man's life as it found it? do you think the publicity of so close a shame can even pass away from a proud and a sensitive nature?"

"That is true; I forgot."

She thought of the grave fair face that she had once likened to the "King of the great Pendragonship," and of the anguish which in youth had gnawed at the heart of the man now so passionless and so tranquil.

She perceived that some chord she could not trace connected Tricotrin with the dishonor for which he felt so keenly. She remembered too, more vividly than she remembered most things of that forgotten time, the impatience with which he had heard her quote Estmere's praise of her after the vine-festival. She did not know that her young Faust of the golden toys had been the son of this dishonored wife. She did not know that he withheld that fact from her lest its disquietude should haunt and disturb her peace.

"Then you can tell me no more of him than this?" she said at last, with a certain disappointment in her voice.

He looked quickly at her.

"Of Estmere? No," he said, with bitter impatience. "What is it you can want to be told? His career lies before the world; he is a great man; and pays the penalty of such greatness in having the stare of a million

curious eyes fastened on every dearest secret of his private life. Love betrayed him; he wedded himself to public ambitions. You can tell better than I whether they content him: if you take interest sufficient in him to make the matter your study."

She gave a restless movement.

"I imagine Lord Estmere has other aims beside happiness. I scarcely think any great man is likely to be happy; that belongs to peasants, to students, to youth, and provincialism. It is not much known in his world and in mine. If we are amused it is the utmost we ask. You do not think it possible that he should recognise me?"

"You fear it?"

"Fear it!" she echoed, as she rose with an impetuous movement, and turned her head instinctively to the mirror. "Fear it! Good Heaven! Of course I fear it—I should die of shame!——"

"You live on falsehood, then? A dangerous food—one sure, soon or late, to end in utter famine. But you need have no dread on this score. You were but a fair child then; now——"

"Now?"—she laughed softly, a low, victorious laugh of conscious power.

"Now—you know well enough what you are. Every man tells it you in eloquence that would be the most sickening tale you could hear were not vanity the sole passion that knows no satiety!"

She made no reply; a flush of resentment gleamed in her brilliant eyes, and unspoken words trembled passionately on her lips. She held them back by the lingering remembrance of the gratitude she owed him; she knew that she could not deny him the right of a speech that none else would have dared to utter to her.

He looked at her in silence many moments.

"You never think of a second marriage?" he asked, suddenly.

"Think of it!—I cannot choose but think of it! It is always being forced upon my thoughts! But if you mean do I intend one,—no!"

"And wherefore?"

"Ask me rather why I should!" she said, with a careless laugh. "What is there I could gain by it?"

"Gain is your only god, then?"

"That is very harsh! I do not think I am avaricious. But I have absolutely all that I can desire; I should risk jarring the harmony of my life, and I should add nothing worth adding to it by any other alliance. Besides,—my liberty charms me. I might marry for a throne perhaps; but there are none vacant just now!"

The levity and negligence of the reply grated cruelly on him:—she spoke of wedding with the sovereigns of the earth as though she were imperial born, to the man but for whose charity she would have been left to beggary and bastardy!

"You speak in jest," he said gravely. "Such jests are well enough in such a youth as yours, but if you have no other creed with which to meet the weariness of waning years and the loneliness of age, I pity you!"

"Pity *me!*"

She laughed in all the glory of her beauty, all the plenitude of her power, all the rich and full sufficiency of her existence!

"Yes, I pity you," he answered her, with that accent in his voice which had always stilled and moved her in her childhood. "Even from women as beautiful as you, time steals their charms; time brings satiety, lassitude, envy, and the disappointment of dead hopes; time confronts them with rivals, and takes the bloom from the cheeks, and the light from the eyes, and the gladness from the soul: in those days of darkness it will be ill with you if in the days of your youth you have only gained vanities that wither and ambitions that cloy, if you have not learned the sweetness and strength that lie in unselfish love and impersonal thought. You reign now—ah, yes! And I can well understand how your kingdom is so fair that you never remember how time like the sea eats away its bright shores, and how with each year it will grow less —and less—and less,—when once the season of your youth is passed. But what I fear for you, in your future, are the bitterness and the solitude that you will know, if—having disdained the anchorage of love—you shall be

left alone on the rock of your pride, when your kingdom of beauty has sunk out of sight beneath the tide of the devouring years."

The voice that she had known so well; the poetic language that had used to move her heart like music had still their spell for her; she listened, incredulous and unwilling to be touched, yet stirred by the words against her own desire.

But the spirit of rebellion, the habits of mockery in her would not let her own to that reluctant emotion.

"You mistake very much, I think!" she said, negligently. "I do not believe a woman's power so evanescent; when youth goes there is intellect left. I am little of a student,—but the play of political power amuses me well. As for love,—pray credit me! that may be the Alpha and Omega of provincial life, it is merely one among a thousand other arts and distractions in the world that I live in. You may hear it made the be-all and end-all of existence at a peasant's bridal; but it wears another aspect in our drawing-rooms."

"I know. It is represented by vice, intrigue, ambition, and avarice! Madame de Lirà—think me as harsh as you will,—I confess that the courtesan, who dances in the paint and tinsel of her wretched trade, is not in my sight much the inferior of you great ladies, who wed yourselves for gain, and intrigue for aggrandizement from your bridal to your death-hour! I am not sure, after all, that when in your childhood I dissuaded you from entrance on an actress's career, I did not withhold you from the more honest, if the less lucrative, position of the two."

She heard him in mute amaze, her eyes surveying with a grand wrath the man who dared bring such bare truths as these into her presence: who dared force the nakedness of an unpolished fact upon the elegant artifices of her daily life. She said nothing; but with a bow, in which all her anger and all her dignity were mutely uttered, she swept past him and out of the chamber.

"Can nothing teach him what I have become!" she thought, with passionate forgetfulness of every other *thing* than of her own eminence and sovereignty

It seemed to her almost a crime against her that a man should live who held it in his power thus to arraign and to insult her.

She forgot that she had summoned him; she only remembered that he had dared to speak to her—the truth.

When she had left him, he paced to and fro the deserted room, with his head sunk upon his chest, and his heart sick within him.

She had stung him far more deeply than she had dreamed: she had dealt him a blow she had been all unconscious of striking. He had come to her bidding with the gladness of a love eager to spend its loyalty in service, with the unselfishness of a tenderness, oblivious of its own claims, and grateful for mere remembrance; and he had been only met with the name of Estmere!

"Must he have all—even her thoughts!" he said, in the bitterness of his soul. The time had been,—nay, the time was still,—when, thinking of the career of the great noble, he had balanced its pain, its toil, its fretting ambitions, its early dishonor, its surrender to the fetters of public service against the freedom and the careless joys of his own life, and had laughed as he felt how free was the one from the cares of the other. Now for the first time there arose that which he envied Estmere.

For, the love with which he had loved the fair child who had wandered with him through the illuminated streets of the rejoicing city,—who had laughed with him among the vineyards of her river-home, and danced for him with the wild poppies in her hair, and sung to him as she bounded aloft upon the grape-press,—was love tenfold more passionate, because tenfold more hopeless, for this imperious and peerless woman who would almost have scorned to yield her beauty even to a monarch's embraces.

As he left her palace, the song so often on his lips was silent; his head, always so gallantly erect, was sunk; his heart was heavy within him.

He thought he had controlled this weakness in him;—but though passion when blessed with possession flies as fast as the hues of the rainbow,—passion, whose only food is pain, glows on and on, unblenched, like the red in

an Egyptian sky, through the long years of drought and famine.

He bent his steps toward the religious hospital, where a few nights before he had left the dying frame of his enemy.

The words that he had lately spoken had recalled to him a forgotten duty.

"Is it better with him?" he asked at the entrance-gate.

"Scarcely. He will never recover, we think."

"I have three gold pieces on me; all I have: will you take them?"

"Take them? For this man?"

"Yes—spend it for him in such fashion as seems wisest to you; I will bring more shortly. If it be possible, employ what I can bring, so that when he goes forth once more to the world he may have a chance of purer life,—if that can be."

"You know him?"

"I know of him."

"And you are his friend?"

"No. His foe."

"His foe? And yet——? Well, it shall be as you say."

"I thank you. All I desire is,—never let him learn that it was I who brought him here, or that it is I who do this thing. Give him no burden of gratitude save to yourselves."

Then he turned away, and went on through the night once more.

They were well used to him, and asked him no questions.

Since he had saved this miserable life from dissolution, he deemed that he had a right to give it one added chance to cleanse itself from crime. But the hate that he bore to him as his enemy was none the less keen and burning, because justice to him as a fallen wretch outweighed it. "The thing which I should have done as just to a stranger, must I do as none the less just to my foe," was the principle which his actions followed. The laws of men were not the laws of life. Yet, nevertheless, he could

have slain the Greek who lay yonder had he given rein to his passion.

"And the woman lived who could forsake Estmere for that Judas!" he mused as he paced the gloomy streets backward to the gayer quarters of the city. "Truly there are women who turn to evil as the swine to filth; and know no more than swine the pearls that lie beneath their feet!"

CHAPTER XLV.

In a by street, in an obscure quarter of Paris, there dwelt an artist who had suddenly achieved fame—so suddenly that he had had no time to change his abode, to meet his new visitant, Fortune,—a guest who has ever had a curious habitude of changing the broken chairs, the chipped pipe-trays, the lame legged table, the lumber and the poverty of a painter's work-room, into costly couches, antique bronzes, ebony cabinets, eastern embroideries, picturesque color, and luxurious ease, but who not unfrequently turns out with the old rubbish, a witch-stone that she found there, called genius. Critics and connoisseurs rarely, however, detect its absence.

This artist, Paul Lélis, was not young when Fortune suddenly bethought herself of him; and he clung to his witch-stone; and he did not care to leave that old familiar nook high under the roof, where he had spent so many bohemian years—where he had known what it was to have to lie in bed all day in winter to keep from perishing of cold, to have to scratch little pictures for sweetmeat-boxes to get a mouthful of onions and bread; to have to face a dish without bread, a stove without warmth, a pipe without smoke, and still to keep the soul to create, alive and unnumbed,—where too he had known what it was to love and have love, and see the brown eyes of his mistress shine tenderly, though in a garret; and where, through his lattice, he possessed so glorious a view over the roofs

and the spires and the crowns of the trees, of the red gold of the sunsets, and the pale gold of the dawns, and all the marvelous, mystic, eternal loveliness of the ever-changing clouds.

Lélis clung to his attic; being a strange man, and a man of tenacious attachment, and a man of stubborn will; and since the world had taken the fancy to adore him, he made it toil wearily and pantingly up the hundred and twenty-two stairs to his room. Lélis had tarried long enough in his time on the threshold of great men's antechambers; it was his turn now to wait and refuse to stir, and see them labor up his crooked, unsavory, oil-lit stairway. And he would laugh grimly, standing at the top.

"I painted as well twenty years ago; why did you not see it then?" was all that he said to his patrons.

Why did they not?—and those tender brown eyes of the mistress of his youth had grown dim and tired, and closed in never-ending slumber, just because they had never seen it, and there had been no food on the naked shelf.

The world had come to him at last, because a great man, chancing to fall on a little study of his, had recognized the worth in it, and had groped his way through the darkness to the attic; and, being one whose word was powerful, and whose knowledge of art was undoubted, had in time been followed to the garret by the world.

Lélis was grateful as a dog to the man; but he was cynical to the world.

"You are bitter, Lélis," said the personage who had thus brought the world to his door.

"No; I am just," said the artist. "For you—you had not seen my pictures till you lit on that little thing, and came straight to me. But Paris—look you—Paris has seen them through a score of years, and would find no color in them, and no form, because her critics swore that there were none. If it be the truth now that I can paint, why have they lied all through these years? tell me that."

"Why? Because it is so much easier to repeat a *parrot cry* than to use the faculties of vision and judgment;

so much easier to damn with facile unanimity than to bend the brain and the sight to the patience of investigation and appreciation!"

"That is true, whoever says it. Who is with you, Lélis?" a voice called from the doorway.

Without awaiting an answer the new-comer pushed the atelier door open, and entered. On the threshold he paused, as though inclined to draw back; but the impulse was conquered, and he came forward to where the artist and his patron stood.

"It is my Lord Estmere," said Lélis, turning with warm familiar greeting.

"So you have brought Fame to Lélis, my English lord?" said Tricotrin, without ceremony. "That was a good work of yours. She is a comet that has a strange fancy only to come forth like a corpse-candle, and dance over men's graves. It is her way. When men will have her out in the noon of their youth, she kills them; and the painter's bier is set under his Transfiguration, and the soldier's body is chained to the St. Helena rock, and the poet's grave is made at Missolonghi. It is always so."

Estmere bowed his head in assent; he was endeavoring to remember where he had once met this stranger who thus addressed him—where he had once heard these mellow, ringing, harmonious accents.

"Was it because you were afraid of dying in your prime, that you would never woo Fame then yourself?" asked Lélis, with a smile.

"Oh-hè!" answered Tricotrin, seating himself on a deal box that served as a table, and whereat he and the artist had eaten many a meal of roast chestnuts and black coffee. "I never wanted her; she is a weather vane, never still two moments; she is a spaniel that quits the Plantagenet the moment the battle goes against him, and fawns on Bolingbroke; she is an alchemist's crucible, that has every fair and rich thing thrown into it, but will only yield in return the calcined stones of chagrin and disappointment; she is a harlot, whose kisses are to be bought, and who runs after those who brawl the loudest and swagger the finest in the world's market-places. No! I

want nothing of her. My lord here condemned her as I came in; he said she was the offspring of echoing parrots, of imitative sheep, of fawning hounds. Who can want the creature of such progenitors?"

Estmere smiled.

"I do not think that I said anything of the kind. You accredit me with your own ironies."

"Did you not? Well—it was the deduction from your words, at any rate. How fares my Dante?"

"The Dante!" echoed Estmere in surprise, and with sudden remembrance. "Ah! I surely remember now; it was you who made me the fortunate possessor of that rare specimen of Attavante?"

"A very polite phrase; it was your own gold that made you the possessor of it. Yes; I sold it to you I wonder you recollect it; but great men have clearer memories, I believe, than little busy-bodies. The book lives still?"

"Certainly; in my library at Villiers."

"He sold his Dante?" asked Lélis. "He and I have known what hunger and cold mean, both of us. The kingdom of Bohemia has other sides to it than the side that humorists sketch, and that poets portray. The dance, the song, the laugh; the holiday in the woods, waltz in the cabaret, the romp in the orchard,—it has them indeed; but then no less has it also the fireless stove, the soupless platter, the winter nights of starvation, the dull stupid misery staring out of a garret window to watch the lights being lit in the palace over the river."

"Bagatelle!" cried Tricotrin, "if we are true bohemians we stamp our feet in the snow till we are warm, we read Rabelais till we forget to be hungry, and we look up at the winter planets, and think how pale they make the palace gas look. Bah, Lélis!—has fame already turned you renegade?"

"If Bohemia do indeed make such philosophers of its subjects, it must have been as deeply wronged by the world's construction as the Epicurean doctrines!" said Estmere, with that mixture of contempt and wonder,

which a man of his character and of his order feels for the disciples of the religion of "*rire, et ne rien faire.*"

"Nay," said Tricotrin, "I will not profess for it as Lucretius does of Epicureanism, that in reality it consists of renunciation. But I believe, on the whole, its followers bear deprivation better than most followers of other deities,—which may be the second best thing perhaps. But you can know and tell nothing of it, Lord Estmere; it is a world you have never entered!"

"I can endure my exclusion!"

"I will warrant you can; but, nevertheless, if you had entered once in awhile, you might have learned a few things useful perhaps; and you might have unlearned the only thing that mars your character and your career, to my fancy."

"You do my character and my career much honor by making them the objects of your study."

Tricotrin smiled: the sarcasm did not sting him.

"I study most things, after my own fashion," he said, carelessly. "Though, to be sure, an English Eupatrid like you is a little too cold and costly a crystal, may be, and comes from too high a glacier to fit well into a bohemian's microscope. And, in truth, I like you better for your loyalty to your Order; it becomes you. The Optimate flattering the Populares, because he fears the deluge, is the most pitiable spectacle that the world holds. I like your exclusivism better."

"I am happy to merit and receive your approbation!" said Estmere, with his delicate contempt.

"You think a bohemian should not even venture to praise a statesman?" laughed Tricotrin. "Oh, I know that temper of yours so well;—it just does what it sees fit and deems becoming its royalty; and cares not two straws whether the nations shout exultation or execration after its acts. You would go to the guillotine as you would receive your country's stars and crosses,—with just the same indifference, with just the same conviction that neither decapitation nor decoration could add anything to, or take anything from, your dignity!"

Estmere glanced at him with some wonder, and with

more distaste; and, without reply, turned to examine some sketches that leaned against the wall.

Among them was a little pinewood panel, on which was painted the head of a child of some fourteen years, with a red hood half over her curls, and her eyes gazing out, as if into the future, half smiling, half awed, with eagerness, with rapture, and with a tinge of fear.

"That is very lovely," he said, as he turned it to the light. "It is yours, Lélis, of course?"

"The thing belongs to me," interrupted Tricotrin, quickly. "And it is not for sale."

"Perhaps you can oblige me with the name of the artist?"

"No! He wants no patronage."

The answer was curt and ungracious. Estmere laid the panel down as he heard.

"Whoever painted it must have genius."

"Genius!" interrupted Tricotrin. "Pooh! What is genius? Only the power to see a little deeper and a little clearer than most other people. That is all."

"The power of vision? Of course. But that renders it none the less rare."

"Oh, yes, it is rare—rare like kingfishers, and sandpipers, and herons, and black eagles. And so men always shoot it down, as they do the birds, and stick up the dead body in glass cases, and label it, and stare at it, and bemoan it as 'so singular,' having done their best to insure its extinction!"

Estmere looked keenly at him.

"Surely genius that secretes itself as your friend's must do," he said, touching the panel afresh, "commits suicide, and desires its own extinction?"

"Pshaw!" said Tricotrin, impatiently, and with none of his habitual courtesy. "You think the kingfisher and the black eagle have no better thing to live for than to become the decorations of a great personage's glass cabinets? You think genius can find no higher end than to furnish frescoes and panelings for a nobleman's halls and antechambers? You mistake very much; the mistake is a general one in your Order. But believe me, the kingfisher enjoys his brown moorland stream, and his tufts of

green rushes, and his water-swept bough of hawthorn; the eagle enjoys his wild rocks, and his sweep through the air, and his steady gaze at the sun that blinds all human eyes;—and neither ever imagine that the great men below pity them because they are not stuffed, and labeled, and praised by rule in their palaces! And genius is much of the birds' fashion of thinking. It lives its own life! and is not, as you connoisseurs are given to fancy, wretched unless you see fit in your graciousness to deem it worth the glass-case of your criticism, and the straw-stuffing of your gold. For it knows, as kingfisher and eagle know also, that stuffed birds nevermore use their wings, and are evermore subject to be bought and be sold."

An answering sarcasm rose to Estmere's lips—he had seen the vultures of genius, deeming themselves eagles, ofttimes so ravenous for his gold!—but he checked it, for he remembered that both these men were poor, that neither was his equal. He laid aside the panel once more in silence, and, with a farewell to the painter Lélis and a bend of his head to the stranger, passed from the room.

"You were surely rude to him, Tricotrin," said the artist, as the door closed.

"I might be so."

"But why should you be so? He is a man whom one can honor with sincerity; he is generous without ostentation, full of infinite thought for others, and has the tenderness of a lover, not the condescension of a patron, for all Art."

"I do not dispute his high qualities; but he is safe to be surfeited with sycophants, a rough word can do him no harm. As far as I know aught of him, he prefers an acid truth to a sugared lie."

"But why would you not let him learn that you painted that little study?"

"To what use? I once sold him a book. He would never have understood that I would not sell him a picture. Moreover—you know well enough I am a kingfisher, and I like my brook to be quiet. If my lord there once took it into his fancy to point me out to his world,

my brook would be forever muddy with the feet of gazers, and forever choked up with the purses they would fling at me. Art is my tuft of rushes, my wild hawthorn bough, that lend me shade and sweetness. I do not want to be asked to vend them at so much a blade, at so much a blossom!"

And he threw a cloth over the panel, and put it under his arm, and crossed over to the easel.

Lélis said no more. He knew the temper of his friend; and he did not know that any memory endeared this little portrait of the child in her scarlet hood. He had been away in Egypt at the autumn season when the bright eyes of the Waif had first gazed upon Paris; and of her Tricotrin never spoke.

Estmere meantime went out to where his horse waited, and passed on to pursue his visits to various houses where painters, obscure, poor, some young, some old, but all unable to seize the world in that mood which gives fame to those who know how to strike the hot iron aright, lived in that misery of the physical life, and that supremacy of the mental life, which are at once the curse and the blessing of such men's existence.

Estmere was well known to the whole art-world for the patience with which he would seek out buried talents; for the delicacy and discrimination which tempered in him the connoisseur's ofttimes too pitiless science; for the munificence and graceful generosity wherewith his gifts and his aids were invariably given. Though cold, contemptuous, negligent, and keen of satire, with his equals, to men of genius who lived in poverty he was ever gentle, cordial, tolerant of all prejudice, and skilled at rendering his assistance in such fashion that he never made them conscious of their debt.

Some time elapsed in the visits that he paid; it was much later in the day when he rode through the quarter on his homeward way. In one of its tortuous streets his farther passage was blocked by a throng of people who had poured out from the wineshops, the masons' yards, the miserable houses near, and congregated in one narrow way before a stone-worker's little court, which in its turn was filled by a dense, close-packed, screaming mob.

It was the fashion to flock to Lélis, who was at that moment the chief theme of Paris; and two or three equipages were arrested, like himself, by this frantic and tumultuous crowd, against which outriders and equerries vainly thrust their animals, and lifted their whips.

"What is it?" he asked: his servants answered him that it was a mere nothing:—a rope had given way in a well which they were clearing, and had precipitated a workman seventy feet into the choke-damp and water:—that was all: the populace was always so excitable, so noisy about nothing. That their lord should be delayed, merely because a stone-mason was drowning in a dead well, was intolerable, was ridiculous.

"It is you who make revolutions!" thought Estmere, as he heard his attendants' mockery of their own class, and strove in vain to force his horse against the press. There was a louder cry going up from the throats of the street crowd: in its uproar he could hear the words—"Tricotrin!"

"Who is it that is hurt?" he asked of an art student nearest him: the lad replied readily:

"The stone-mason has fallen—of course: but it is Tricotrin who is gone down to save him; it is Tricotrin we are anxious about."

"He will find but a corpse; and he will never come up alive himself!' cried a black-browed woman of the fish-marts: her dark, hard, coarse features working with strong emotion. "I know what that well is:—my father was killed there thirty years ago. It is full of poison."

"They wanted to lower a dog down to see if the beast could live in the air!" cried the shrill piping voice of a baker's boy. "But Tricotrin would not have it so; he said we had no business to imperil a poor brute that could not speak for itself; he called it cowardly to put a cur in a place we were afraid of ourselves!"

"Silence, silence!" shouted a score of voices. "We cannot hear what they are saying in the yard!"

What they were saying in the yard,—in broken tempestuous outcries,—was that they had left fifty yards of cord out over the windlass, and both men were still at the bottom.

"Is he dead?" shrieked the mob outside, in a frantic paroxysm of terror.

"Is he dead?" echoed a woman's voice, with a thrill in it that froze the hearts of every hearer of it. Estmere, absorbed, like the people, in listening for the answer from the little courtway and in watching the violent gesticulations and useless movements of the throng within it, started and turned his head. At his side stood an open equipage, glittering in all the panoply of rank; in it its owner had risen, and the haughty beauty of her face was rigid and colorless and strained with horror. He recognized the face of the Duchess de Lirà.

"She has a soul in her,—for she has pity," he thought, touched by that terror on a countenance commonly so dazzling and so chill—a terror for the physical hazard of an unknown man, for the beating hearts of a plebeian crowd, for simple tragedies of daily life, as he believed it.

At that moment a loud moan came from the throng within the little court.

"Do ye hear?" cried the fishwoman, mad with emotion, and struggling upward till she had set her bare feet upon the motionless carriage-wheel in such fashion as gave her nearer sight. "That was how they moaned when they dragged my father up dead! Hark what they say,—all the rope is run out, and it is as dark as pitch in the pit,—the choke-damp has killed the light that he carried!"

The cry shuddered through the people.

The light was out! Was all hope over?

The slender fair hand of the patrician woman clinched the brown, brawny arm of the fishgirl in an unconscious gesture: in the instinctive sympathy of the same fear, the same love, the same anguish.

An awful hush fell upon the crowd,—alone, and raised above the others, the two women stood side by side, with scarcely one touch of common sex or common humanity betwixt them in their vast divergence, yet made as one in that brief moment by the unison of dread, by the leveler of grief.

In the press within the yard a shout of wild joy hysterical, triumphant, adoring. The

rope had curled a hundred times back again over the windlass; they had drawn him upward to the fairness of the day; he was living,—he was unhurt,—he had spoken to them,—his light was out indeed, but it had only fallen in the water, because he had loosed his hold on it to seize the lost man's body, and bear it up to the living world. He was safe!—and even the mason whom he had rescued might still live also. The crowd went mad with ecstasy, and all the infectious strength of heroism; as it had gone mad a moment earlier with pity and with fear.

Thus ardently will the high daring of one man work on, and fuse, and melt, and set alight the sluggish, apathetic, selfish mass of human lives.

The aristocrat in her carriage sank silently downward among her cushions, her face was white to the lips; and she trembled violently.

The fishwoman flushed a deep red over her tawny skin, and muttered a curse in the jargon of her tirade, and bent over her creel that had got shaken and half emptied in the crush.

Estmere had never withdrawn his gaze from the face of the woman whom he had condemned as so cold an egotist, so heartless a coquette; and whom he now beheld thus moved by what he deemed were sympathy and compassion for unknown and imperiled lives. Some wonder touched him at the strength of the emotion that he saw in her: but it was outweighed by the attraction which this pain, and pity, and infinite fear, softening that dazzling countenance, possessed for him; imagining them as he did to be born from that mere human sorrow for human suffering which gentle-natured women feel for the calamity of a stranger, for the pang of the lowest creature upon earth. He bent to her, and addressed her with a more tender accent in his voice than she had ever heard: she started as his words fell on her ear, and answered him hurriedly,—

"Ill? No, I ail nothing. I thank you much. This scene has shocked me: that is all. Can you learn for me,—how it is really with him?——"

"With the man who fell?"

"No! With the man who saved him! Is heroism

so common in this self-absorbed and brutalized age of ours that we shall do it no homage, show it no interest?"

"I honor it as greatly as you can do," he answered her gently, and with some surprise. "I will go at once, and see him myself, if possible."

He went, and as quickly as he could, having dismounted, forced his way into the court. She sat breathless and motionless; her mouth was parched, her brain throbbed, her limbs quivered,—in that hour all the long-buried, long-forgotten memories of her childhood, and all the love she had once borne the savior of her life, awoke in passionate remorse. She was so base, so low, so cowardly in her own sight:—these people, these creatures of the cellar, and the wineshop, and the fish-mart, and the timber-yard were true to him, were loyal to him, dared show their fealty to him and their fears for him. But she!—she who scorned dastards, and loathed liars with all the force of a proud and fearless temper, sat silent, and motionless, and stirred not to welcome him from out the jaws of death!

The fishwoman, shouldering afresh her huge creel, looked curiously at this "aristocrat," who had been joined with her for one instant in the communion of terror.

"She must care for him,—in some fashion," she mused. "Her great eyes looked all blind and mad. They say these cold, dainty things in their palaces, sometimes,—well! she is the first of them I have not hated."

The subject of her thoughts, with a sudden impulse, leant to her with a score of gold pieces in her hand.

"Your merchandise is half lost," she said hurriedly. "Let me put these in your basket in their stead."

The fishwoman fastened her black ruthless eyes on her as the eyes of her ancestress might have fastened on the white, haughty loveliness of Marie Antoinette.

"I have not earned your money. I do not want it," she said, curtly. "But I like you, though you are one of *them;*—you care for Tricotrin."

She shouldered her creel and went.

The Duchess de Lirà leaned back in her carriage very pale still, and with a quiver in her curling, haughty

mouth. The words struck to her heart like a blow of steel.

"That woman is nobler than I!" she thought, bitterly. "She is not ashamed of what she feels for him,—she can dare to have sincerity!"

Estmere returning, approached her again through the swiftly-dispersing crowd.

"You have seen him?" she asked, feverishly, with a curious apprehension of what evil she scarcely could have told.

"No: I regret to say I found it impossible to obey your wishes and my own," he answered her. "This hero of the populace must be of a strange temper, and of a very noble one. He was no sooner safe above ground, they say, than he dived into a house, and disappeared through its back ways into some adjoining lane, to escape the eulogy and the adoration of the people. The mason whom he went down to save is breathing and can speak; there is no doubt of his recovery. It was a noble rescue: I regret more than I can say, not to have been in time to arrest the actor in it."

"If he be gone so swiftly he can have no hurt?" she asked with a deep quick breath.

"None. It seems that he is of a singular strength and agility: such men escape where weaklings or fools would perish. And now, shall we move from this throng? Where is it that you desire to go?"

She endeavored to smile as she answered him:

"I was about to visit your wonderful Lélis. But the noise of this crowd has made me disinclined for anything save quietude. I will return to my hotel, if you please."

He assented, and rode beside her carriage through the long and various roads that led from that poor and obscure neighborhood to her gates.

The color was still blanched from her face, and she was both graver and gentler than her wont; but to him she had never been so seductive.

"She has feeling in her. I did her wrong," he mused; and his nature was one which ever led him, in view of an

injustice done, to make even too full and too generous an amends.

As he left her at her own residence, and went homeward himself, his thoughts lingered over the scene which had touched her thus deeply.

"Tricotrin?—Tricotrin?" he murmured. "Tricotrin? I have heard that word somewhere. Surely it is the name or the pseudonym of that man whom I spoke with to-day; of that man who once sold me my Dante?"

And he felt a certain regret; for, toward the hero who had gone down into the foul air and poisonous perils of the well in the stone-yard, he felt the attraction of one courageous temper to another; but toward the bohemian who had treated him with such unceremonious familiarity on that morning, he felt the aversion of a haughty and exclusive Order for a class in which all that it deems most perilous and most lawless are embodied.

"They are strange men—these Ishmaels of social life," he thought. "They will plunge into all the chances of a horrible death to rescue some fellow-creature from a tomb, or share it with him if his delivery be impossible; and yet they will beguile, and lead, and drag, and goad hundreds of those poor, ignorant, blind wild-beasts of the populace to be mowed down at barricades and in street riots, on the mere impulse of a rabid hatred of Class, on the mere chimera of that 'Universal Equality' which every law of nature and of science proves an impossibility—a monstrosity that would be found utterly untenable if it ever could even be reached and essayed!"

As he thus mused of a theme so different, there drifted back into his thoughts, by some untraceable connection, the memory of the little portrait he had seen of the child in the scarlet hood.

He recollected what fugitive intangible likeness it had been which had attracted him in the golden, bright, tender-hued picture—it was a likeness to the woman from whom he had that hour parted.

Though the face of a gipsy child, yet surely it had a look like this scornful court beauty, this omnipotent Duchess de Lirà

"That man must have, himself, been the artist," mused Estmere. "I will ask Lélis of him."

But when he asked Lélis he found that the painter could tell him but little.

"Tricotrin?" said Lélis, "Tricotrin? Yes: it is surely his name, my Lord Estmere. And why should it not be? We have odd names among us; odder than that. Of Tricotrin I know nothing: except the one thing—that I have loved him for far over twenty years. We are not given to the asking of credentials, to the taking of passports; we of Bohemia. He may spring from sovereigns; he may come from cobblers; I cannot tell you. Of a surety I never asked him.

"We met first of all at a Wirthaus in Bavaria. I forget where exactly; but in one of those pretty quaint villages toward the Tyrol. There was a big brawny man with a box of fantoccini, and there was a slender dark girl, with a tambourine, whose duty it was to play while the puppets danced. There was a little black monkey, starved, frightened, miserable; ordered to dance also, and shivering and moaning piteously, instead of dancing.

"The big man thrashed the little monkey till it shrieked; the girl wept, and then the man beat her. Tricotrin and I were sitting in the wooden gallery over the door, taking our wine. He saw all this, and down he leapt from the porch, right over the rails and the vine; got the stick from the man, and collared him, and belabored him till he swore and screamed as only a Roman could do. Then he flung the wretch into the river; a brawling, foaming, shallow stream, that wetted him to the skin. Then he lifted the monkey up in his arms, caressed it, talked to it, took off its little dress, and came up again to the gallery, and sat down to his walnuts and wine.

"The Roman made a horrible outcry below; Tricotrin looked over the wooden rail and threw him a doubloon.

"'Brute,' said he, 'I will come down and give you another beating, if you desire it; also another ducking, with readiness. But have your monkey again you never will. There is its value as a marketable thing; of any other value you know naught. If you have wisdom you will betake yourself to some other hostelry.'

"The man slunk off, pocketing his doubloon, and Tricotrin kept his monkey. That is how I came to know him first. I thought that scene better warranty of his character than a banker's certificate. But then we bohemians have queer notions."

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE stone-mason, lying in the narrow hospital bed, with broken limbs and bruised body, unhappy in his thoughts, and fast fretting himself to fever over the coming destitution of his wife and children through the many weeks wherein he would be unfit for labor, was made happy by news which came to him. News that a great lady, who had chanced to witness the accident from her carriage, had sent her people to say that she would charge herself with all the needs of his family during such time as he should be incapable of labor, and after also if they needed it.

The man was a tough republican, a communist to the core, one who had been in troubles of the barricades, and who had tasted prison fare more than once for the too frank and sturdy utterance of his opinions over the black coffee and the domino-table of his evening haunt. But he swore a great oath, with the tears falling like rain down his cheeks, and muttered:

"I will never say one word against the aristocrats again! They will have bread, do you hear? my little ones will have bread!"

For the great revolutionist of Hunger, who preaches with a force so frightful and an illogical eloquence that the dullest can comprehend, had been his chief political teacher: and had bade him take a pike because he could not lay his hand on a loaf.

The servants of Estmere, sent to inquire what could be done for the family of this injured workman, brought him *word* that they had been forestalled by a few minutes

only; all that the poor people wanted would be supplied to them by the Duchess de Lirà—a support much needed, for the wife was infirm of health, and lame, and there were more children than generally crowd around a French laborer's table, to share its sour bread and meager onion soup.

"She must have a noble temper; I may have done her wrong," he thought once again.

Was it possible that behind this woman's dazzling extravagance, and egotism, and vanities, and vagaries, and semblance of utter heedlessness and heartlessness, there were hidden such gracious and generous things of mercy, and of pity as was this?

It seemed only just to think so. He was willing to believe it; he did believe. And a danger that had never been in her before for him, gave her peril for him now.

She might be callous only because none had known how to awaken her heart. She had been wedded so young to an unloved lord: this in itself was so dire a temptation. She was flattered by fools, who weakened her reason, while they heated and strengthened her errors and her foibles. She was surrounded by an atmosphere so artificial, by a homage so deteriorating, by influences so dangerous both morally and mentally.

There was so much excuse for her faults and follies, for her cruelties and egotisms; who could tell how fair and sweet a nature might not wake into life, if—she loved?

So he mused, with fanciful conjectures; fancies wholly unlike his grave, sarcastic, and skeptical intelligence, but characteristic of every man attracted by a woman, whose sorceries charm him while his reason condemns her.

He commenced a study that was the most hazardous tribute to her power he could have rendered; he commenced the study of her temperament, of her actions, of her heart. Oftentimes when she resented the neglect he was guilty of toward her, the silence he preserved in her presence, the indifference with which he remained apart while others crowded around her, she, and she alone, occupied his thoughts that were intent on analyzing her ironies, scanning her coquetries, and weighing the changeful indices of her anomalous vagaries.

He saw much that repelled, much that offended, much that alienated him, in her: but he also saw much that irresistibly beguiled him, and much that seemed to him to tell of a dormant soul, which only slumbered because none had known aright how to stir it from its indolent sleep.

"There should be a fine nature there; with such eyes as those no woman, surely, can be soulless," he mused, as he glanced at her one night, at one of the many houses where they were in the habitude of meeting.

"Of what were you thinking, Lord Estmere, when you looked at me so keenly an hour ago?" she asked of him, later on, when he took for a moment a seat beside her.

"It would be to risk your anger to answer frankly."

"And any other than a frank reply you would not give? Of how few of the men that I know could I say the same! Well,—answer me candidly then: hazard my anger."

He leaned slightly nearer to her: a cantata that was being sung by the most famous singers of Paris prevented their words reaching the ears of any around them.

"My thoughts then were—could a woman with so much poetry in her face as Madame de Lirà carries in hers, be as utterly given over to the vanities, the artifices, and the egotism of her world, as the whole tenor of her life, acts, and words, would lead one to infer?"

"You but wonder what I wonder, also!" she said with an accent in the answer which left no doubt of its sincerity. "We women, I think, have poetry on our lips, poetry sometimes in our faces; but we have hard, bitter, bad prose in our hearts—the passionless calculating prose of avarice, of self-love, of insatiable ambition!"

"Nay—you at least must have something higher than this, or you would not lay blame to yourself?"

"Why? May not one see one's own sin, even when one is saturated through and through with it? A man murders; but I do not believe he ever ceases to see bloodshed as hateful. So we murder our higher natures, but, if we have anything of conscience left in us, we know that the slaughter is criminal."

"You have not killed yours if you still regret it?"

"How can you tell? I can scarcely tell myself. I have not killed it? No! By such a subtle euphuism as that by which Byzantine sovereigns swore they had not killed their predecessors, when they had only smote their eyes to blindness, and sealed their lives down in dungeons!"

He regarded her earnestly.

"You have not killed it. With you the prison-bars will be loosed, and the blinded eyes will see the light, when——"

"When what?"

"When you shall love."

The graveness and the sadness of his voice made the words far more impressive than if they had been uttered in the accent of a lover. They were passionless and melancholy, strangely contrasting with the gayety, the brilliancy, and the levity of the palace-scene around them.

She heard, with a sense of proud joy, that she had thus compelled even from him the homage of interest and warning; also with a vague sense of wonder why the speech of this man—who in all things was most utterly dissimilar to him—brought back on her thoughts, and carried with them the same influence as the utterances of Tricotrin.

"Pardon me the freedom of speech," pursued Estmere, with a slight weary smile. "By the years which are between us, I may use a latitude of phrase that would be denied to others younger and more fortunate, although less privileged. You asked for my candor; I have given it. I believe that much softness, which you now abjure, will awaken in you when love shall have been taught to you."

Her eyes clouded, and gleamed impatiently under their languid lids and curling lashes. She was incensed at the care with which he had hastened to disclaim for his words the look of any amorous meaning, and to indicate that he left the sweet task of teaching such lessons of love to all others who might choose to take it.

"Love!" she echoed, with a light laugh. "I have said often before,—I am tired of only hearing the word! I have no want of it, no belief in it!"

"That was my conclusion."

"And you tell me so in a tone that is in itself a rebuke! Love?—the gipsies of Hugo, the sentimentalists of Goethe, the rhapsodists of Shelley, may make it the god of their being; but we—we who have the world—can look on it at most as only a toy, a distraction, a thing to blow with each breeze like the child's paper windmill!"

His eyes never changed from their grave study of her. He answered her calmly:

"I imagined you held those views. What I said was that, when you think differently, then, and then only, will that higher and gentler nature I spoke of arise in you; if—you possess it. But since you look thus upon love, is it well or merciful on your part to do your very uttermost, as you habitually do, to awaken it everywhere, and everywhere inflame it to its greatest strength, and devotion, and folly?"

She tossed her golden head backward with a magnificent audacity of consciousness.

"Would you have me veil my face, then, in pity to mankind?"

He smiled at the arrogance of this vanity: a smile that she could not translate.

"Perhaps, you save some as effectually as though you veiled it, when you succeed in proving to them that with that beauty there goes no heart! If I be discourteous, pardon me; you desired candor."

"And your candor, like most other candor, appears to be only—Condemnation!"

She spoke with bitterness; she was so deeply galled by this second sentence, in which he had conveyed to her that, however perilous to others, she was free of peril to him.

Estmere smiled again.

"Poor candor! It is never right. If agreeable, it is denounced as flattery; if distasteful, it is slighted as censure!"

He left her side soon afterward at the conclusion of the
; left her to a vivid, heartsick, impatient sense of
ssness to move, or touch, or win him, such as
efore had been known among her countless and

effortless victories: a restless, angered, despairing knowledge that he held her in doubt, in condemnation, almost in contempt, and that he had told her, almost openly, that for him she possessed no allurement.

He had humiliated her, and deeply angered her; but he had attained more influence over her, more attraction for her, than he had exercised before; and, despite the limitless faith she felt in her own omnipotence, she did not divine that Estmere himself had thought—

"She is right perhaps! To have love withheld from her, even by the coldest and the wisest, her face had need to remain unseen!"

Nevertheless, although he acknowledged this, he lingered in the place where that face met his sight or was recalled to his memory, with every day which brought the sea of carriages rolling through the sunlight of the streets, with every night which filled the chambers of the palaces with banquet, or ceremonial, or festivity.

And he saw her beauty at its height, her nature at its worst.

Unguarded now by the care of her lost husband's tenderness, which had in other years so sedulously sheltered her from any peril, she was free to follow to their wildest extravagance her own caprices and desires.

She had been left at perfect freedom; no rein remained on her will or her fancy.

Those who had the trust of her properties were two aged men of high rank and courtly breed, who were speedily content to see all things through her eyes. There was no sort of check upon the indulgence of that intense passion for gorgeous display, sensuous pomp, and ever-varying distraction, which she—with the soul in her of the Waif and Stray—never wearied of enjoying to its uttermost abandonment. They told her, in some alarm, that with ten years of such expenditure of hers even the massive fortunes, on which she had entered, would be dissipated by the ceaseless strain. She laughed. To a woman, who knew that she could select another lord from princes if she chose upon the morrow, the threat of future ruin was only a gay grotesque jest.

All that she did was done in an exquisite harmony, re-

finement, and elegance of taste; because there was in her that innate sense of fitness, and of beauty, which had in her childhood made every coarse tone, or motley hue, irritating and painful to her; and which had led her, unconsciously, to arrange her very wild flowers in blending colors that would have charmed a painter's love of pure and sympathetic tones.

Though reared in poverty, she had been reared in such a manner as cultured and fostered all this delicacy of artistic feeling, and instinct for symmetrical form, to its full development. Where this sense once lives, it is imperishable; and makes the mind which it pervades incapable of doing it an outrage. It forces the Roman beggar te fling his rags around him with the dignity of a toga; it impels the Campagna model to fold her nude limbs into the sublime repose of a Phydian statue.

But for all that, she loosed herself to the sweet exercise of her power in every imaginable form of extravagance and of display. The exaggerated luxuries, the inordinate splendor, the wanton waste that are characteristic of the age, of the world, of the city, in which she lived, reached in her their greatest height. The old half-barbaric passion for the visible witnesses of wealth and sovereignty, native to her, evinced itself now that she possessed the license to indulge it.

She had the oriental love of glow, and glitter, and pomp, and sound; she had all that temper of the present century which inclines it to scenic effects in the lieu of poetic beauty, to lustrous color in the lieu of accurate proportion, to intoxicating choruses in the lieu of classic cadence. And she launched herself into such extremity of magnificence as gives to such an instinct as this an ever-changing and perpetual delight.

Unconsciously to herself, through all her chillness of pride and arrogance of scorn, there shone out in her mode of life the impulse and evidence of one who has not from birth upward inherited power: and to whom its possession is therefore as a sorcerer's wand, whose magic is unceasingly wondrous to the one brought within its mystic circle.

None noted this; for her artistic taste was so unerring

that no false note, or coarse color, in the pageantry of her existence ever betrayed it. But it was there.

The born-empress is very weary of those hours in which she must wear her state-robes, and receive the formality of homage. The woman, raised from privacy, into the blaze of a monarch's glory deems no hours so exquisite as those in which the people kneel, submissive, at her feet, and the crown rests on her brow.

Viva disclosed that she was not an hereditary sovereign by this one trait alone—that she was never willing to lay her scepter aside, never desirous of being quit of her purples, never so perfectly content as when the full luster and luxury of her royalty attested to its power.

Were some rare jewel on sale, at whose cost even princes hesitated, she purchased it; were some picture in the market at a fabulous price, she made it hers; were there some tropical flower rare beyond all others, she would spend thousands to add it to her conservatories; were some entertainment spoken of, which had been signalized by some unwonted thing, she would eclipse it with some marvel a hundredfold more beautiful, eccentric, or extravagant, furnished converse for the world.

The jewel might be utterly superfluous, the picture one which did not please her taste, the flower might have no special loveliness, and the festival no special charm, to her own thinking. But merely to possess them, to display them, to furnish food for the world's speech by them, was an unfailing delight which never palled on her, because it gratified her sense of empire, her consciousness of being without rival.

In no manner could she attain this delight more easily, more constantly, or with more publicity, than by the pleasures with which she filled her own time and that of the society she gathered about her. Her inventive wit found field, and interest, in the conception and execution of countless fresh fashions of distraction and of excitement.

The graceful fantastic fancy that had once made her dance like an almàh among the scarlet beans of the cottage garden, and believe herself a queen when she sat in the old beech-tree with a tall sword-lily for her scepter, now made her devise a thousand ways of adding brilliancy,

and variety, and surprise, and cost—that great modern gauge of every merit,—to her amusements and entertainments. Exclusive with all the haughty exclusivism of an earlier nobility, lavish with all the profuse prodigality of present imperialism, reckless with the levity of the age, and dazzling with a seduction all her own, her fêtes and her banquets were the theme of the world of pleasure, the paradise of her associates, the despair of all outside her chosen pale. She ruled pleasure, and was ruled by it: and no other thing was the object, or the idol, of her days.

Generous, indeed, she was; whoever asked her for money had it. In moments of remorse she would strive to still her conscience by some such large charity as that with which she succored the stone-mason's desolate family. But these were fitful, unguided, the offspring of impulse always, never of principle.

She had delivered herself wholly over to the worship of egotism, and extravagance, and the joyous religion of pleasure; and she abandoned herself all the more completely, and violently, to the pursuit of these when the sting of one man's neglect pierced through the velvet folds of her exultant vanity, when one thorn amid all her innumerable roses thrust itself into her bosom, and reminded her that she was mortal.

Thus he saw her empire at its height—her character at its worst; and still, despite these, he lingered near her, and still doubted if, in this woman, there were not something higher and nobler latent, that her sycophants never roused and her lovers never wakened.

And one night when he chanced to be in her presence, an incident again arose which again made him ask himself: "Since she has the emotion of pity, will she not have also one day in her heart its twin-divinity of love?"

CHAPTER XLVII.

THERE was a new piece at one of the most famous and most sparkling of the theaters of Paris—one of those gay minglings of music, travesty, beauty, burlesque, and wit, which are half opera, half comedy, wholly spectacle, to which the world will run, leaving the grave decorums of legitimate art as the Romans would run to the gladiators and the rope-dancers, leaving the stage of Terence.

"Let me be but amused! Let me only laugh if I die!" cries the world in every age. It has so much of grief and tragedy in its own realities, it has so many bitter tears to shed in its solitude, it has such weariness of labor without end, it has such infinitude of woe to regard in its prisons, in its homes, in its battle-fields, in its harlotries, in its avarices, in its famines; it is so heart-sick of them all, that it would fain be lulled to forgetfulness of its own terrors; it asks only to laugh for awhile, even if it laugh but at shadows.

"The world is vain, frivolous, reckless of that which is earnest; it is a courtesan who thinks only of pleasure, of adornment, of gewgaws, of the toys of the hour!" is the reproach which its satirists in every age hoot at it.

Alas! it is a courtesan who, having sold herself to evil, strives to forget her vile bargain; who, having washed her cheeks white with saltest tears, strives to believe that the paint calls the true color back; who, having been face to face for so long with blackest guilt, keenest hunger, dreadest woe, strives to loose their ghosts, that incessantly follow her, in the tumult of her own thoughtless laughter.

"Let me be but amused!"—the cry is the aching cry of a world that is overborne with pain, and with longing for the golden years of its youth; that cry is never louder than when the world is most conscious of its own infamy.

In the Roman Empire, in the Byzantine Empire, in the

Second Empire of Napoleonic France, the world, reeking with corruption, staggering under the burden of tyrannies, and delivered over to the dominion of lust, has shrieked loudest in its blindness of suffering—"Let me only laugh if I die!"

The piece commenced with gay, airy, mirthful music; extravagant, sparkling, indecent, ironical, spectacular, voluptuous, as suits the temper of this modern age; suits its fatigue, its languor, its fever of discontent, its exhaustion of speculation, suits it because, being full of despair, it desires distraction, and, all its thoughts being doubts, it strives so hard not to think.

As the first silvery notes of the chief actress rang on the air, the audience welcomed them with tumultuous delight.

She was a great artist in her fashion; in the by-play, the trivialties, the amorous glances, the sensual graces, the union of elegance and lasciviousness, the eloquence of smile, of word, of gesture, which are needed far more, on the modern stage, than is tragic passion or scholarly comprehension. She was a great artist; she seemed to have the gift of eternal youth and of everlasting fame; her public had never wearied of Coriolis.

The night was a new triumph, many as had been the nights of triumph which she had numbered.

But there had come a certain weariness to her in this public festival; a certain toilsomeness had stolen into the perpetual play of the mime; a certain impatience of this endless robing, and singing, and laughing, and dancing, and wearing of smiles, had entered into her, well as she had long loved her life.

There came hours now in which she wanted rest; hours in which she felt her head ache and her limbs grow tired; hours of satiety, of exhaustion, of fretful fever; hours, inevitable, that come to the empress as to the actress, to the statesman as to the stage-clown. And now, as she frolicked on the boards, and moved like a sylph, and caroled like a bird, her eyes, wandering over the great semicircle of the house, rested on one woman who sat regarding her,—a woman young, of exceeding *beauty*, appareled like a sovereign, and with her court-

iers surrounding her in a group that was inattentive to the spectacle, and only attentive to her face and to her words.

"Who is that piece of splendor yonder?" had asked Coriolis once, first seeing this woman.

"It is the Duchess de Lirà," they had answered.

Coriolis ever looked at her closely when she herself passed to the front of the stage.

"You are a Duchess—a great lady of France,—you are in the flower of your youth and the flush of your beauty,—you can have all I have had without taking thought for it or toil for it,—you are an aristocrat;—and I hate you!" she said in her soul, this night, watching this spectator, whom she envied, as she played on in her new extravaganza, and heard the thunders of the theater hail it as the greatest of all her successes.

She herself had enjoyed, indeed; but time was stealing the elasticity from her limbs, the buoyancy from her spirit, the bloom from her skin, the gloss from her hair, the spontaneity from her laughter; and from such women as she Time robs all, and to them brings nothing. She had her scepter, indeed; but the passage of the years had loaded its ivory and gold with lead, and she began to grow tired of the incessant exertion which was needed to hold it in her own grasp, and prevent it from passing to the outstretched hands of her rivals.

Meanwhile, the one whom she envied watched her in turn with a curious emotion.

Viva never heard the actress's name without a thrill of horror. She never saw it lettered on the walls of a city without a throb at her heart, as though she saw a snake's eyes watching her. It was ever an agony to her to recall that night of her madness. As she had grown to know the ways and the wisdom of the world, and had beheld the danger through which she had passed by the light of that world's knowledge, she knew what the precipice had been on which she then had stood in such laughing and trustful security. At times when its memory rushed over her, she felt the hot blood flush over her brow and bosom at the mere thought that such a peril had ever touched her, such an ignominy ever approached her.

Who her boy-wooer had been she never knew; she wondered often. And when she mused on him, and on her temptress, a deadly hatred, alien to all the negligent gayety of her temper, woke in her; a scorching shame consumed her.

All the fair, sweet, harmless things of her early life were well-nigh forgotten; all that sunny, serene, innocent existence, while yet she had taken no more thought than the lilies of the field, or sinned more sin than the birds of the air, had faded into one soft haze of dim, pure, confused color. That perfect peace in which she had not known that she was happy,—because she had not then known what sorrow meant, and thus had found no measure of her joy,—was all far distant to her, scarce remembered more than is the sunlight of some tranquil unmemorable summer-day of long ago. But that one night's memories were branded forever as with fire on her brain.

That men should still live who, if they only knew what she once had been, could point at her as one whom they had beheld at the house of a courtesan!

If she were alone when this remembrance came on her she would pace her chamber like a magnificent leopardess, and set her teeth in wrath that a woman, who could command the world, could not yet purchase the oblivion of a few brief hours!

It maddened her the more because she knew that, but for the guardian hand which had seized her from the flower-hidden abyss, she would have entered this kingdom of evil to which she had been tempted, in all her supreme faith and ignorance and guileless vanity. She knew that—but for him—she would have fled to the pollution of the stage, which had looked to her such immortal glory.

She knew that now she would have been even as Coriolis:—even as all those women who concealed the leprosy of sin with the satin domino of the masked ball; who avenged their own outlawry by pitiless plunder, by merciless dupery, of the world which had proscribed them; who dressed, and danced, and feasted, and had no future; and secure of a banquet to-day, might be left to starvation to-morrow. The women of whom she thought

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of her knowledge and experience, in the security of her rank, it filled her with a strange wondering pity to think of the foolish, trustful, credulous child that she had been, and of the pathetic senseless love that she had once borne this sovereign of the stage. A fierce hate thrilled in her also as she watched her temptress. Through this woman that one ineffaceable memory was burned into her haughty life; that one intolerable shame had been drawn down on her proud head; that one loathsome hour had been lived through to pollute her past!

"Actresses never change,—till we see them by daylight!" Estmere answered her, ignorant where her thoughts wandered. "Look through your glass ere you judge."

She did so:—looked long, then dropped it with a shudder.

"It is a death's-head under a mask of roses and lilies! And yet how lovely that woman still is!"

"She seems to move you?"

"She does; for,—when I saw her first I longed to be an actress too!"

"*You!*—an actress! Is it possible?"

"Yes, I. Perhaps I am one, as it is. How can you tell?"

He did not know the spring of the half-remorseful words; he thought she implied some consciousness that her coquetry was but a cruel acting, since her heart was never touched to feeling.

"Let your higher nature speak, and follow what it says. You will never be one then," he murmured in her ear.

She was silent; unwittingly he had rebuked her.

"If he knew!" she thought, meeting the clear, grave eyes of the man whose one idol was inexorable Truth, whose one unpardonable sin was specious Falsehood; and she drove the thought from her as fast as it arose. She had had no need to think all through the years of her fortunate life: she left that travail to the weary, the unlovely, the wretched, the solitary. Thought was their sentence, their solace: with her it had naught to do.

Outside the theater it was a cold, dark, ghastly night.

Although late in the spring, it was very cheerless and rained heavily.

About the end of the second act, while from within the bursts of music came, now faintly, now fully, out into the street, a wanderer, who had moved restlessly all day and night to and fro the labyrinth of the lighted town, strayed near to the play-house and paused;—he could not have told why, except that others paused with him;—opposite the building and its glittering arc and stars of gas-jets.

The wanderer was Bruno.

He stood, without knowing what he did, looking up at the crescent of lights; and hearing, without knowing what he heard, the distant cadence of the joyous and airy music.

Close at his elbow pressed a sailor of his own southern seaboard, a great, fierce, black-browed barbarian, half smuggler and half pirate, who yet had softness sufficient in him,—because that day he had met his whilom comrade, and had been scared by the haggard face which he had once known so bright and brown under the shadow of their tawny sails,—to stay staunchly by the side of the stricken man, though in the eyes that turned on him there was no recognition, but only the mute dull suffering of an animal spent by the hunters unto death.

"What would you do, Bruno?" he asked hastily, as the fisherman seeing persons enter through the glittering doorway, moved forward with them to enter also.

He paused, and looked for the first time with a gleam of consciousness on the features of his ancient sea-mate.

"It is you, Royallé?" he murmured wearily. "Are the boats ready? You must go without me;—she is not come home."

The streets, the gas-lights, the throng, the music, were naught to him; he thought he was on the yellow sands of his old home with the fishing-smacks standing out to sea in a fair wind, and his little cabin high up upon the rocks above the silvery plumes of olive.

"There are no boats," muttered Royallé. "We are in Paris, and this is no place for you."

"Paris? Paris?" the other echoed, the dulled brain

playing with the word. "Is it Paris? She used to wish for Paris. May be she is here,—I have sought every where."

And he forced his way nearer to the open door.

Royallé seized him and sought to force him back.

"Not there, not there, Bruno!" he murmured. "What avail to seek her in scenes of pleasure?"

The sailor shook him off, and went forward with the dogged resolve of the insane.

"Losing gold ye seek hither and thither," he muttered. "Shall I do less by my treasure?"

Ere he could be stayed, he had flung down a coin as he saw others doing, and had thrust himself into the throng that was forcing itself through the mouth of the pit. They were separated; Royallé could do nothing except follow him.

The glare of light, the din of music, the blaze of gold and of color seemed to blind and to stupefy him. He stood wedged in by the crowd into whose center he had thrust himself; his gaunt, tall form towering above theirs; his wild pathetic eyes glancing from side to side like a hunted dog's; his blue canvas shirt flung back from his chest; his long dark hair streaming backward from the bronzed southern grandeur of his hardened features. He was like a desert animal suddenly strayed in among a laughing human crowd.

There was a scene of fairy-land on the stage which the audience were applauding till the roof rang again; a scene of wood and water, and silver cascades, and aisles of roses, and white-winged sylphs that fluttered on the branches, and troops of girls, arrayed like every flower that bloomed beneath the sun, who danced in airiest measures to the music sounding through the house.

To the fisherman of the Riviera it was all real; his great brown eyes gazed on it with wondering awe; through his dimmed brain there wandered weird tales, heard in his childhood, of enchanted lands where no mortal foot might wander. He stood erect, amazed, motionless; dizzy with the riot of sound and the modulations of motion, and the radiance of color that had broken on his vision as he came out from the darkness of the ight.

And all the while his eyes were seeking out each separate face in the massed loveliness of that myriad of dancing girls;—seeking out hers which he could not find.

From the back of the flowering glades there came the graceful, swaying, floating form of a woman arrayed like a lotus-lily. Her form was scarce clothed in the white and green that fashioned the leaves of the lily; her sunny hair, chaplet-crowned, streamed behind her; her azure eyes laughed with arch gayety;—Coriolis looked in the spring of her earliest youth as she bounded into the circle of girl-flowers, and poured out her song with the easy sweet mirth of the lark.

Across her song a wild cry rang:

"*It is she!*"

He stood erect a moment, his eyes blazing with light, his arm stretched out, his chest heaving with deep-drawn breaths; then with a leap like a deer's he sprang from seat to seat over the heads of the people on to the stage where she stood.

The music on her lips was stricken mute; the band of living flowers fell from around her and left her alone. Criminal fear came into her radiant eyes. She stood powerless, motionless, gazing on the man she had dishonored, while on the players and their public a horrified silence fell.

He stretched his arms out to her, while his voice thrilled through the stillness.

"Madelon! Madelon! Thou art in paradise, and hast forgot me!—is it so?"

His whole frame drooped, his limbs lost their strength, he shuddered, and stood gazing at her:—the rising tumult of the house, the confused clamor of the amazed multitude had no power to reach his ear; he only saw the woman whom he had sought through the desolation of the world;—the woman who, found shrank from him, and was afraid.

That guilty fear which he met in her look pierced him like a dagger's thrust; reason seemed to come back to him with the shuddering horror that ran through his senses. He lifted his head, as the lion mortally wounded will raise it to look once more at his foes and gazed on

that heated, breathless, motley multitude below, then gazed again on her;—on the snowy bare limbs, on the bosom that panted above its vesture of gold, on the painted loveliness which, near, had no youth and no bloom.

Then he knew that this was not heaven, but hell; and the blindness of half a lifetime was pierced in twain by that terrible light. He seized her, and gazed into her eyes, and crushed her soft frame against him, and flung her from him with a cry that smote the listening people as though they had but one ear and one soul.

"You are not *mine*, though you live in her form! Ah! vile thing, cruel devil, that mocks me! What have you done with the creature I loved? You give her limbs to the eyes of the lewd; and her loveliness to the lust of the mob; and the lips that I kissed to the crowds that devour her!—but where is the soul that I worshiped? where is the life that was mine? They were God's; *you* could not take them? They lie in His hand: you could not steal *them* with her body?"

He stood erect one moment, as men will stand when a death-shot has struck them; his eyes gazed out over the risen throngs, burning and blind; on his face was the majesty of an unutterable despair. Then, with one great cry from a broken heart, he flung his arms above his head and fell—his forehead striking on the fallen limbs of his wife, the life-blood welling from his mouth, and staining purple the white lilies on her breast. When they raised him he was dead:—he had been dying more than twenty years.

And on the silence of the horror-stricken throngs the voice of the sailor Royallé rang as he turned and faced them, lifting up the lifeless body in his arms.

"She was his wife, look you. Yet God made women,—God made women and gave them to men!"

A shudder ran through all the listening multitude. For once the people of Paris saw no mirth in the tragedy of a man's dishonor.

And in the tumult, and the terror, and the stupefaction a great crowded house, the proudest and coldest

woman there staggered to her feet, and, blind and faint, stretched out her hands to the one nearest her.

"Take me away!" she murmured. "Oh, take me away. I heard their story once, and saw no sin in *her!*"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

UNTIL the latest hours of that night Estmere sat in the loneliness of his great apartments, with his hound's head lying on his knee, and his thoughts sunk far into the past.

The scene which he had witnessed had opened afresh a long-closed wound. The wound had pierced too deeply for the jarred nerves ever to close again impervious to pain; and the tragedy of the theater had brought back on his memory, with all the freshness of a recent blow, the time when he had himself surprised the sin of the wife whom his roof had sheltered and his honor crowned.

On the autumnal day when Tricotrin had gazed upon him in his solitude at Villiers, that wound had been soothed only by the passage of a few years. Betwixt then and now there had stretched a long interval of public life, filled with a long succession of public honor, public services, public ambitions, public dignities and labors. The early treachery lay far away, folded under the sealed pages of his lost youth.

The throb of its horror had been soothed by the anodynes of great attainments; the ache of its shame had been stilled by the balm of a nation's trust. Many seasons would now pass by, and leave its memory unawakened. But there were times when that memory was still roused in all its suffering; and this was one of them.

All that passage of his life was stamped into his mind with letters of fire.

The idolatry with which he had loved the woman who had betrayed him; the intoxication of their first hours of

union; the slow-dawning consciousness, so long thrust back from sight, that this creature, so exquisite in form, was mindless and soulless as any beautiful cheetah gamboling under Indian suns. The loyalty to her, strong in him as a religion, which, because she was *his*, forbade him to insult her with so much even as suspicion; the proud chivalry which withheld from him by its noble blindness a thousand signs that to meaner natures would have sufficed as warning. The unutterable horror which overwhelmed him, when chance revealed his own dishonor to him, and he found his spoiler in his household hireling, in the creature of his bounty, in the pampered, trusted, caressed debtor of his race and of his purse—all these seemed to him as things of yesterday, as their memories arose with the death scene of Bruno.

That treachery had colored all his life. It had killed happiness in him with one blow. It had left him without aught of the colors of joy upon his life, though he had in their stead wide command and passionless peace. Suspicion it could not teach to a temper too generous, too fearless, and too proud for suspicion's timid meanness. But it made the fair faces of women without beauty in his sight; and it left him in his lofty loneliness without companionship and without sympathy.

The passion which to other men was so fair, was only to him as the deadly poison which counterfeited the bread of life.

The law had freed him; his betrayer, for aught he knew, was dead; the world never paused to recall that early tale of a life whose maturity it honored; but he could never forget—he could never live as though this thing had never been.

And its remembrance was sharp as iron in his soul this night; for he knew that he loved again.

"Love, love! What have I to do with love?" he mused. "It betrayed me in my youth; it can only fool me more fatally still, now that my youth is gone!"

Yet, while his reason spoke thus, his impulse thirsted for that old, sweet, wild folly of his forgotten years; his heart ached for all the long-lost joys so free to every common fate; his passions wakened from their sleep, and

longed for the sunlight that lies in a woman's eyes, for the paradise that lies in a woman's lips; his solitude grew cold, cheerless, unutterably desolate.

"Am I mad, that after all these years I dream thus?" he asked.

But the madness was upon him; and ambition, and renown, and honor, and the tribute of men, and the peace of the past, all grew worthless and bitter, and even as empty mockeries of his pain; for in his loneliness he knew that he would give them all, only once more to lose himself in the delirious sweetness of his youth, only once more to murmur in a woman's ear—

"I love!"

CHAPTER XLIX.

WITH dawn the next day vast throngs poured to a small house beside the theater, in the pearly light of the spring morning.

There was only a dead sailor lying there: with the look upon his face of one who had died seeking what he could never find on earth; and with a little knot of dried sea-grasses, tied around by a woman's azure ribbon, lying on his broad, brown, emaciated breast, where the coarse blue linen of his shirt fell asunder. But they came all the day through, throng upon throng, ever succeeding each other into the chamber where he lay:—then at nightfall they flocked to the theater.

"She acts?" they asked; and they were answered, "Yes, she acts."

And they poured in faster and faster, till there was no standing-place in the building, and the waiting crowds stretched far down the street.

She, herself, sat in her chamber, with the diamonds in her bosom, and the white wings on her shoulders. Her face was ashen-hued, and her eyes, so blue and laughing, had a startled horror in them as of one who sees some

ghastly shape:—but she would act. She was thinking, with her cheek resting on a jeweled fan that had been an emperor's gift. She was thinking,—this thing that had no thought.

She saw the yellow level shore down by the south; the sea glancing in the sun; the rocks covered with olive and myrtle and aloe; the blue distance severed here and there by the tall slender shafts of a palm. She saw a child of fifteen, with the fairest of faces, rosy and pearly as the gum-cistus blossoms; idling away all her days under the brown shadow of a boat, or dappling her pretty feet in the play of the surf; listening to the love words of a handsome black-browed sailor, half seaman, half fisherman, and laughing as she took with graceful greed his corals, his shells, his pieces of silk, his little golden crucifix, his ear-rings of silver.

She saw a cabin high up among the luxuriance of Riviera vegetation on the sunlit slope of a rocky shore, where, when the sails of the lateeners grew smaller and smaller as they went coasting westward, a young girl, full of petulant discontent, would bite her scarlet lips, and ruffle her hands among her yellow hair; and wonder what life away from these endless seas was like; and break the coral necklet of her husband's gift because she was so weary of the giver; and throw the beads away, one by one, into the water-spring bubbling from the rock, counting, "Je reste—je m'en vais!—je reste—je m'en vais!" in a Gretchen-like fashion of forecasting fate.

She saw a young child sleeping in a cradle shaped like a boat, and a seventeen-year-old mother who stooped over it, and kissed it once upon the mouth, and then went from it slowly, looking her last farewell, and thinking, "Gérant will have it cared for—the child will not be harmed;" and so passed swiftly across the threshold never to return; fleeing faster and faster as she heard that the lateen craft, returning, were in sight.

She saw all these things, pictures of dead years; where t with the diamonds glittering in her bosom, and sic of the overture floating dreamily into her cham m the theater beyond.

The years since had been mirthful and glittering: remorse had never touched this light mercurial nature, sin had never weighed upon this volatile skeptical temper. She had done well for herself, she thought; she had gained riches, and fame, and lovers, and pleasures; she had had thousands of days of delight, thousands of nights of triumph. She had worn the jewels kings gave, and she had heard the tumult of nations' applause. She had feasted her sight and her senses; she had reigned in her way as queens reign. She had laughed on all her life through; and had drunk the secret joys of the passions. She had roved as the butterflies rove; and the flowers had all borne her honey. She had been glad,—glad,—glad ever; as things soulless and sensuous are. And only to-night did she hear the hush of the seas in the south; only to-night did she hear the sound of the voice of the dead.

The man sinned against, had suffered, dying hard, through a score of years; but the woman who had sinned had rejoiced through a score of years of light, and of laughter, and of life. Yet men say that remorse strikes the balance between the lives that endure and the lives that offend! Remorse!—that steals in for one hour out of a million, and thrusts one thorn amid a long season of roses, and furls one leaf beneath the bed of pleasure, and cries "Lo! I am Compensation!"

There was a deafening shout without; she did not hear it. She heard only the music of the Mediterranean as its waves washed upon the strand.

They came to her; the public clamored for her; the stage waited.

She rose, with the startled glazing look in her eyes as of one who beholds a horror not of the visible world.

Some, more merciful than the rest, bade her wait; the penalty could be but forfeit. As they spoke, from the body of the house there ran a loud hoarse roar, as of a lion savage for its prey; the Public knows no pity.

The old familiar sound aroused her; she laughed, tossing some more gold dust upon her sunny hair:

"Do you hear it? It is a beast that must be fed, or it will tear. I sold myself to it long ago. Besides—half a

million francs!—I cannot lose them, though I have spent them in a day!"

Then with an airy antelope-like spring she bounded on the stage.

The theater was closely filled from pit to roof. They welcomed her with a tempest of applause.

Its director smiled content.

"The piece will hold the stage a year," he said; for he knew that the Public is as the dragons of old legends, and asks not what perishes, so that only its greed for new food be appeased.

And she played on:—her gay feet gliding, her rich song rising, her airy laugh echoing, over the place where Jean Bruno had died.

CHAPTER L.

In the late spring-tide, verging upon summer, Paris was once more rejoicing:—rejoicing as her fashion is, with laughter on her lips, and war within her heart; with gold eagles gleaming on her arches, and wealth stagnating in her coffers; with flowers blossoming in all her corners, and exiles barred from her shores for the dread crime of uttering truth; with the word of Peace blazoned on her pyrotechnic showers, and half a million of her soldiers armed to the teeth, and waiting for their work. Rejoicing with infinite gayety, and wit, and song, and color; rejoicing with cartridges hidden in her soldiers' accouterments, that the hail of the shot might sweep clear her boulevards, if amid all her festivities she once dared to remember that Liberty was missing.

Foreign sovereigns had traveled thither; there were feasting, and singing, and marshaling of troops by day, and illuminating of streets by night, and all the various beguilements and intoxications by which France is persuaded to forget that she is in fetters.

[illegible]r the green aisles and avenues of her pleasant [illegible]here were the glitter of arms, the bright hues of

flags, the flutter of banners, the sounds of ceaseless music, the constant roll of drums and challenge of cannon, and an ever-flowing sea of dainty equipages rolled from noon till sunset through the streets and squares, and under the rich foliage of the woods of Boulogne.

Among those thousands of carriages there was one which, for its mingled pomp and elegance, its ermine, and its velvet, and its gold, its fiery fury of speed, and its outriders like a guard of honor, drew all eyes upon it: and the mistress thereof, lying back with her little dog beside her, was so marvelously fair, that the beauty-loving senses of the inflammable crowds made them rush, and press, and tear headlong to gaze at her; and uncover their heads to her, as though she were a sovereign, and hail her with a sudden spontaneous acclamation. She,—accustomed to that homage of the *monstrari digito*, and amused by its unwonted manifestation from the echoing shouts of the throngs—smiled, and bowed to the people, as though she were in truth their empress, and looked and laughed at the two persons who were seated opposite her.

"I am dangerous to the peace of France," she said, with light amusement. "They will want to crown me next!"

As she spoke her horses were perforce detained by the passage of cavalry, going at full speed, with their lances gleaming in the sun, to their place in the field of manœuvre; and her glance, idly straying around, over the heads of the closely-packed multitude, met the eyes of Tricotrin.

He alone of all the men in that crowd had not uncovered his head to her in homage; his gaze was fastened on her with a look in which, for the first time in her whole existence, she saw gloom, and rebuke, and passionate scorn.

Her gay laugh died on her lips; her face was shadowed; over her there stole a certain fear.

She remembered her first entry into Paris;—she remembered the hour when he had led her to look upon the miseries and agonies that hid beneath the brightness of the city's surface life;—she remembered the night when she had returned from the dwelling of her temptress, a trembling, *tired, heart-sick* child, who, but for him, had

perished in that death of honor and of conscience which the world for lack of a better word calls sin.

Then the petulance of her stung pride rose and ruled in her.

"Must I ever be pursued by his memory, like some murderer by a ghost!" she thought, with cruel merciless impatience; and she turned her eyes from him, and laughed in all her airiest and most negligent levity, and tossed her little jeweled sweetmeat-box to a pifferaro's monkey, in the wantonness of waste.

Above, in one of the white spacious mansions fringing the broad road, were spectators, filling every balcony and casement to watch the court, and the troops, and the equipages of fashion and of rank sweep by in the summer afternoon.

In the window immediately above her, a window, velvet-hung, veiled with lace, filled with flowers, there was a gilded balcony, with exotics, and china vases, and stands for parrots; a balcony hung and cushioned on such days as these with crimson satin, powdered over by golden butterflies.

With her arms sunk in the cushions' ruby depths, and her cherubic face leaning on them, laughing as she watched the pageantry go by, and turning now and then to tease a parroquet, was the woman to whom that gilded balcony belonged, of whom those gilded butterflies were the self-chosen emblem.

The throngs as they moved below looked up oftentimes; and laughed also; and called out to each other, "There is Coriolis!"

For that night when they had asked breathlessly, "Does she act?" and had seen her act as gayly as ever on the stage, where the fisherman of the Riviera had dropped dead, had endeared her afresh to the people of Paris:—had made some touch of that seduction of assassination, which so strangely beguiles the modern mind, lie for them in those serene azure eyes, those rosy childlike lips, of their play-idol.

Coriolis, leaning there, with her arms on her cushions, and her hand toying with a knot of bright roses, looked

down, and noted that equipage, checked by the passage of the squadrons.

"Those horses are more perfect than mine," thought the actress, whose glory it had ever been to excel the aristocrats.

As her hand hung over the balcony it accidentally let fall one of the roses. It was caught by a puff of wind, and wafted into the carriage. Its occupant looked up: perceived whence it came—then with a gesture of shuddering aversion, threw the rose out, to fall where it would among the multitude.

Coriolis, leaning above, saw the action, and saw the gesture of loathing which accompanied it.

"It is that Duchess de Lirà!" she thought, while her teeth set in that bitter rage which is ever the wrath of such mindless and soulless things as she, if hate once break through the sunny placidity of their profound egotism. "She flings my rose away as though the plague were in its petals. She is as beautiful as I was a score of years ago. She has youth, she has rank, she has splendor, and love, and pleasure, and triumph, all in their prime. Ah! how sweet it would be if the days of the revolution came again, and we could make her come down from that princely chariot to ascend the tumbril of the guillotine!"

So she mused, gazing into the street beneath, with her arms imbedded in the soft rose satin. A vague yet acrid hatred of the women who lived in honor had ever moved her, although she had ever affected to hold them in light and insolent contempt.

The cavalry left the street free; the carriage dashed away with speed, and glitter, and noise.

Coriolis quitted her balcony, and went into the luxurious chamber it adjoined, and pushed her hair off her temples, and stared fixedly at herself in a hand-mirror.

"I hate her! I hate her! She has youth; and I——"

She flung the mirror aside, with a violence that shivered to atoms its glass and its ivory frame.

The only vengeance which ever overtakes such women as she stole, with slow sure steps, upon her.

CHAPTER LI.

In the house where Mère Rose once lived with her linnet, there was now a young carver of ivory. In that little ancient, unfrequented lane, few buyers of his pretty toys ever wandered. He managed to live by letting all his rooms to other people, and by keeping only the small shop, and the dusky den behind it, for his fair fond wife, and for his white Liliputian wares.

The former carried grace and beauty even into the cobweb-hung, pent-up place, where, in another time, the green-grocer had sold his herbs and vegetables, and picked out his largest chestnuts to do pleasure to the Waif and Stray in the attic. The latter gave the brightness of her own youth, and of her own still unfaded hopes to the dark prison-like room, where she sang all day long like a bird.

The day after the great military fête, Léon Clérot, the carver, having taken down his shutters, was flecking the dust from his ivory treasures with a feather-brush, and talking meanwhile to his wife within. She, having brightened and lightened her chamber with the old happy grace of Gaulois blood—with a ribbon here, an atom of gilding there, a pot of common flowers, a bough of blossoming lime,—answered him gayly, sewing all the while at one of his coarse gray shirts.

It was the early forenoon; and both started as they heard the roll of a carriage, and saw one stay at their door. In that out-of-the-world by-way, there was scarce anything upon wheels seen, save the baker's cart, or the hot-chestnut seller's barrow.

Léon stood stupefied as a great lady entered his little domicile; and asked the cost of his crucifixes, his prayer books, and his miniature cabinets.

He confused the prices sadly in his answers, so bewildered was he at the presence of such a patroness; but *she* seemed scarcely to attend. She chose some dozen

ivory works, of the highest value in his collection; paid for them with two big rolls of gold, which dazzled his sight, and made his hand shake as he took them; bade him give the purchases to her footman waiting without; and then lingered—looking at a cross.

"My carving must be very wonderful then, it seems?" thought the poor Dieppois, who had never had the vanity to think so before.

"You live here with your wife?" asked his visitant, suddenly.

"We do, madam."

"You have a good trade?"

"A very bad one, madam."

"You must be very wretched?"

"No, madam; we are happy."

"Happy!"

She threw her glance into the dusky little den where the Picardy girl was sewing, with the little pot of common flowers, marygolds, and lavender, and mignonette at her elbow.

"Happy!" she thought. "He must speak in derision of his own misery!"

She swept up to the girl with her soft languid grace of movement.

"It is impossible; your husband mocks you. You cannot be happy here?"

"Oh yes, madam: we are!"

The aristocrat stood and gazed at her with supreme, incredulous, musing wonder.

"Happy? But how?—why?—on what?"

The girl smiled softly, with a flush on her cheek.

"Ah, madam! We love one another."

Her visitant moved away, with an impatient shadow on her face. Love! Must this word meet her at every turn? must men and women ever have the audacity and insincerity to pretend that it could do for them all that her rank, and riches, and celebrity, and conquest, did for her?

"You have in your house one who calls himself Tricotrin?" she asked quickly of the young bride, whose face beamed brightly as she answered that they had.

"Is he within now?"

"I cannot tell, madam. He is scarce ever at home. But I will see."

"Do so. Tell him that I— Ask him to have the goodness to come hither."

The girl went.

The great lady sat alone in the little room, indifferent how strange her visit might appear to these poor people.

Clérot remained in his outer shop, gazing at his gold, and dreaming of all possible and impossible glories that would arrive for him from the patronage of this stranger, in whom he believed he saw, at the least, some foreign empress.

He had been but a brief while in Paris; he was incessantly occupied on his carving; and he knew few of the celebrities of the city either by sight or name.

His visitor sat gazing, through the little, dusty, cheerless place, out on to the threshold of the door; where, so many years ago, she had once sat under the green-grocer's canopy of thyme, and marjory, and lemons, and grapes, and had listened to the messenger of Coriolis.

Ere long the little Dieppoise, picturesque in the sea-side dress she still retained, returned and approached her with shy deference.

"He is within, madam, for a miracle; he stayed awhile with old Benoit, the cobbler, who is ailing. He will be here at once;"—then, with the quick tact of her nation, she glided away to her husband's side, and left her little den to her guest's sole use.

At that moment Tricotrin entered; with gladness and anxiety at once in his eagerness of regard.

"Is there aught ill with you?" he asked, hurriedly, in a low murmur, as he greeted her. "Speak some foreign tongue; they know no language save their own."

"You think some ill must befall me ere I can remember you!" she said, bitterly, in Italian. "Ah! I merit the satire! Nothing has happened; but I—I was near you the other day in that fearful danger. I have never been at ease since then. And—yesterday you looked so sternly on me; I felt afresh the whole guilt of my life to you. I come to you to say—forgive me!"

All the uncertain impulses, the unregulated instincts, the variable emotions of her better nature were uttered in the words.

She would live again as if this repentance had never touched her: but despite this, the repentance was sincere and ardent while it lasted.

His voice was unsteady as he answered her:

"You have no need to use that word to me. You had my promise long ago to pardon any sin that you might sin against me. But—is this visit prudent? is it not an error against your usual codes and caution?"

"Such prudence is shameful selfishness, and as cowardly as it is shameful!" she murmured, passionately. "But, here, there is little fear. The shop is an artistic one, such as I often visit. My servants will suspect nothing. 'Suspect!' Good Heavens!—I dare speak thus to you, in this house where I lived upon your charity—as though the boundless goodness of your past to me were some dark crime which needed to be screened and hushed!"

She covered her eyes with her hand where she sat leaning her arms on the table. In such moments as these all the arrogance and chillness of her pride vanished, and all the greatness of her debt was alone remembered.

Yet—to the woman who through long years had only known the sweetness and the omnipotence of riches, rank, and power, it was unutterably galling to recall that she had once dwelt under this lowly roof a child of the people, happy in the gifts of chestnuts from the fruit-seller below, happy in the mirth of a charlatan with his noisy drum, happy in wandering out, to gaze at the gas-lighted shops, and listen to the bands of the streets!

If there had only been some means whereby she could have repaid her debt—some gift and grace such as sovereigns bestow upon those who loyally have served them,—she could better have borne the memory of her obligation. She could have succeeded in banishing the past, or in retaining but such remembrance of it as that with which such sovereigns, when seated on their thrones, recall the season when they were discrowned wanderers and exiles. But this was not possible.

With all her longing to give some magnificent quittance of her debts, with all her warmer and holier desire to pour some of her golden treasure into the hands which had lifted her from the grave in her infancy, she had never ventured to offer gifts to him; she had never ventured to tender to him a portion of those things for which she had abandoned him.

Unconsciously, she felt that it would be as vile an outrage as for the faithless wife to tender to her forsaken lord, the gold, and the lands, of the lover for whom she had deserted him.

"I spoke to you the last day you were with me as I had no right to speak," she murmured, her eyes shaded by her hand. "I should have remembered that you had a title to address me with what severity you would. Sometimes—I wonder that you do not denounce me, before all the world, as the basest and weakest thing that ever lived."

"Why?" he said, gently. "I should have no justification, even if I had desire, to do so. When we toss a bird up in the light, free to come or to go, we are foolish and unjust, indeed, if, because it sail away from us on high, we cast a stone after it to bring it earthward in punishment for its abandonment of us. You were just such a bird—you chose the sunlight. Well—so best—you would never have borne storms."

"You think, then, that in the lack of riches I should have been delivered over to evil!"

"I have said: I think you—a woman, nothing less, nothing more."

"I am unlike most women!"—involuntarily she turned and glanced at the little broken piece of mirror that hung above the stove.

"In your beauty you excel them—yes. But in all else you are most essentially feminine."

She played impatiently with an ivory chain that she tained in her hand. She had conceded his right to say her what he would; but none the less did she resent total absence of that homage which was as the very ily bread of her existence, and the relegation of her to vast community of that sex which, in her soul, she

disdained with all the glad contempt of a woman whose friends are men, and who is independent of all female sympathies.

"Were you not hurt that fearful day in the stone-worker's court?" she asked him quickly. "Oh Heavens! I can never tell you what I felt——"

He smiled: if she heard of his death on the morrow, would it hold her back from a state-ball at night?

"Hurt? No. I am never hurt. I bear a charmed life, I think, for I come safely out of strange perils."

"But you may rely on that once too often?"

"Well—if I do? A quick death, a death while one is of use, is a thing to be desired. The only thing I ever dread is slow sickness that might keep me long in dying. But how could you come amid so rough a crowd, and in so poor a quarter?"

"I was about to visit Lélis."

"Lélis! My Lord of Estmere's new-found Velasquez!"

A slight flush came on her face; his eyes watched her with earnest, keen scrutiny.

"He is a great artist?" she said, hurriedly.

"Oh yes! He has been a great artist for twenty years; only, for want of great nobles saying so, the world has never seen it!"

"There is a use, then, at least, for the great nobles!"

"You fancy I deny their use? You are wrong. To do so is to sink to the demagogue's class-hatred. I am well aware of how much art, and manners, and learning, the grace, and the scholarship, and the refinement of life, all owe to the aristocracies of all ages! It is as illiberal to hate a nobility as it is to despise a people."

"In a democracy they would call you an aristocrat, then?"

"Perhaps; as in an aristocracy they call me a democrat. A man who is universally tolerant is sure to be antagonistic to whatever is absolute and in the majority. As politics stand, we dream of the idealic isonomy of the Greek vision; and—find no better reality than a military despotism or a mob-anarchy! You see much of Lord Estmere?"

The question was irrelevant and abrupt. She answered it coldly:

"We move in the same world; I meet him continually."

"And have you solved the questions that interested you—whether attained ambitions and public honors content him?—whether there is any place in the eminence of his life for the weakness of passion?—whether there is any chance of his strength and his peace falling earthward to be the toys of a woman?"

Despite all her self-command, her face flushed, her hands played hurriedly with the ivory chain. His words pierced to a secret which she had striven to hide even from herself.

"I am not aware that such questions ever occurred to me," she made answer, negligently. "I scarcely suppose their investigation would repay me."

"What! You admit that you cannot alter his indifference?"

The words stung all her arrogant vanity into being.

"Do you suppose any indifference could endure one hour longer than *I* chose to grant it lease of life!" she interrupted him, with all her most superb scorn and self-consciousness in arms.

"You have conquered his, then?"

She was silent; her eyes clouded with anger, her hand beat impatiently on the low deal table. She was truthful by nature; and she knew that the one victory alone lacking to her was victory over the man of whom they spoke.

"You are uncertain?" he said, abruptly. "And in that uncertainty lies his chief interest for you! Whether his indifference to you will endure I cannot tell; he is mortal, and you have more than mortal seduction in you! But watch your own heart, ere you attempt to play with his. If you have, indeed, the soul in you to feel the force and
h of his nature, it will be well for you that you have
known him. But if, in the mere wantonness of
r, or the mere impulse of irritation because he has
len before you, you seek to change his coldness

only that you may triumph in his weakness, you will do an accursed work, an unpardonable sin."

Her delicate teeth set, her breath came quickly, as she heard; she looked up suddenly in his eyes.

"Why have you this compassion for him? I have dealt cruelly and inconstantly enough with many; you never interfered to avert *their* fate?"

He paused a moment; then he answered her with an effort,

"There are not many such men as he. Moreover,—he has been once forsaken and betrayed; this should be sufficient to make him sacred to the most wanton coquette that ever found her playthings in the ruin of men's lives."

"You are right," she said gently—and asked no more.

"You will leave him untempted, then?"—there were vivid eagerness, imperious authority, in the demand.

A soft smile, half cruel, half tender, played about her mouth; her glance stole away once more to the mirror.

"Is that wholly in my power to promise?" she said, as she rose.

He knew all the conscious power which was uttered in the vain-glorious question; and he knew that it was as idle to ask her to forego its exercise as it were to ask a brilliant gerfalcon to forego her quarry. An impulse woke in him to tell her of what race her first young lover had come; to tell her that it had been the son of Estmere for whom she had been tempted into the house of Coriolis. But he held his peace; it could avail nothing save to disquiet her and to alarm her; it could only serve to make her more likely to betray herself whenever the time should come that she should meet again the "Prince Fainéant" of her childish fancies.

"Wholly in your power?" he answered her. "May be it is not so. You have the charms that befool men. But all that I say is, spend your seductions elsewhere, sate your passion for triumph otherwise than in misleading, and mocking, and wounding a noble nature that has already been branded, through too frank a faith in the honor of women. He has stung your pride by his neglect—I know!—deadlier crime no man can have against such a trifler as you. But, if there exist in you one hu-

gering touch of the nature that once lived in the child that I cherished, you will have mercy enough, purity enough, generous strength enough, in you to renounce one effort for triumph, to abstain from one indulgence of vanity, to hold back your hand from thrusting fresh thorns into the old, deep, cruel wounds of a husband's dishonor. I have asked nothing of you since the years that we parted. I ask this now. Do with others as you will. But spare him."

Ere she could answer, he had turned away and gone from her, and passed up the dim, narrow stairway, without farewell.

She stood, moved, silent, wondering, with a mist of unshed tears gathering over her haughty eyes. All the latent tenderness in her had awakened at his words; for —she loved the man for whom he had pleaded thus.

"He and Estmere are strangers!" she mused. "Strangers—and yet the one can feel, and can sue, for the other like this! A time there must have been when their lives touched, and were the lives of friends? And yet——"

And yet he had said this was not so; and she knew well that no lie ever tainted his lips.

She went to her carriage, giving orders to the carver, Clérot, that in twelvemonths' time he could scarce have space to execute; and, as she drove through the streets in the bright noonday, her face was pale, and grave, and troubled.

Tricotrin went to the little dull chamber, high in the roof, where the old cobbler lay, slowly dying; and he read aloud the gayest wit of the journals of irony and of caricature, till the cobbler, with the Gaulois temper still in him, laughed again and again where he was stretched on his bed, and half forgot his suffering, and never dreamed that his friend, who thus brought the mercy of mirth and oblivion to his couch of torture, had a bitterness in his own soul surpassing that of death.

CHAPTER LII.

A FEW weeks later, one sweet moonlit night in the month of roses, a man and woman wandered through the orange aisles of the Palace of the Abdication. They were alike guests of the court, and had strayed somewhat away from the torchlight curée, and the illumined waters, and the gardens and galleries filled with the pomp of imperial festivity.

"You will come to Villiers?" he asked, bending low his stately head; he had spoken of her approaching departure, and had entreated for her presence at the summer gathering which was about to fill his own château.

She looked at him with a startled, wistful, doubting look, and hesitated some moments ere she answered.

"To Villiers?" she said, at length, with a strange softness and sadness in her voice. "To Villiers? Yes—I will come to Villiers."

And he, noting that strange intonation, that unusual emotion, thought, in a dreaming wonder, that made his pulses beat with the fever-heat of youth—

"Is it possible that my love would ever be welcome to her?"

CHAPTER LIII.

THE park-gates of Villiers were opened wide in a mellow summer evening; carriage after carriage passed through them, bearing guests to the great château. Torches flared, though the sun was scarce set, the silken standard flowed broad upon the breeze, the wide courts were filled with princely pomp, its lord, long absent, had of late returned.

At the lodge a brown-eyed woman stood, smiling to see the equipages sweep by, and holding back the too eager delight of her youngest born—a ruddy boy of but a few years old. They were people of a sunny, loyal temper in the little gate-house, and had no grudging envy of the "aristocrats." They liked the pageantry and the vivacious life that came with these gatherings of the "noblesse."

"Look, look, mère!—quick!" whispered an elder daughter of some fifteen years. "Paulin told me I should know her, because he would put the ermine rug in her carriage and sables in all the others. Look!—that must be the Duchess de Lirà!"

The mother looked, shading her eyes from the glare of the sunset and torchlight.

The horses slackened their pace as they came through; the great lady, of whose advent there had been much converse among the household of Villiers, for the fame of her beauty had spread even through the provinces, leaned slightly forward, and stretched her hand with a coin to the little boy, looking into his parent's face.

"You are well here, and happy?" she asked.

There was a great sweetness in her voice as she asked the simple question.

"Ah, yes, madam—thank God!" the mother answered to the unlooked-for mark of interest, as the carriage dashed on through the avenue.

"What hast thou, Raoul?" she said to the child. "Holy Mary! what a great gold piece. She must have a tender soul—that proud duchess."

"And how beautiful she is!" sighed her daughter. "Paulin was right." (Paulin was an equerry, who had been in Paris with his lord.) "Paulin says," the girl murmured on, "that she will be châtelaine here ere long. Think you, mère, it is likely?"

"How can we tell?" rejoined her mother absently.

Awhile later, as she moved to and fro, getting his evening meal for her husband, who had come from his labor in the gardens, he asked her what made her so grave and so silent.

"I do not know," she said, with a smile. "Dost thou

remember at all, Valentin, that pretty child that lived with the old Virelois, and died, they say, far away?"

"Tricotrin's Waif? Ay—what of her?"

"Naught of her. But that great lady had a look of her in her face, and set me thinking of her—the pretty, nameless thing—that is all."

Valentin laughed, a man's good-natured contemptuous laugh at a woman's imaginations.

"The Duchess de Lirà like that little foundling! Ah, wife, what a woman thou art for fancies! Do not tell them aloud, for they say that our lord will wed with her."

"I have no fancies to tell," said Ninette, giving him his salad. "She made me remember the child—that is all. It is the dark eyes and the light hair, I dare say. The child had them."

Meantime, in the great vaulted hall of the château, the Duchess de Lirà was welcomed by her host beneath his roof.

She answered him with her accustomed grace and ease; she smiled on him with her accustomed witchery and eloquence; she conversed lightly of the trifles of her travel; she looked in his face without a fear in her eyes or a flush on her cheek for that bygone time, so ever present to her sight, and so deeply buried from his; but when she reached her own chamber she bade her attendants, with imperious haste, leave her alone—she was fatigued—she desired rest. And, locked in her solitude, she flung herself upon her couch, and sobbed bitterly.

The place moved her with strange passion. The dead days thronged like ghosts around her. She felt guilty and ashamed, and filled with a vague terror.

If the pictured walls, the storied chambers, the dumb statues could find voices, they could tell their lord that the woman whom he welcomed as nobles receive their monarchs, had once been a nameless, penniless, alms-fed child, wandering with his peasants in his halls!

"But I have greatness; *that* is no lie!" she thought, as she rose and gazed at herself in those mirrors, whose solace never failed with stormy longing and disquiet at her heart. "I have fulfilled my dream; I have borne out

my ambitions; I return with riches and honors, and triumphs in my hands. I have won my empire, and I am crowned. Men wear their diadems forgetful of their pasts: why may not I? I am his equal; what need to remember that any other time has ever been? My kingdom is real: as real as his!"

Then she smote the tears from her eyes, and smiled at her own loveliness, and called her tire-woman, and burnished to threefold brilliancy the weapons of her charms; and descended the great staircase—proud, radiant, imperial, conscious that she was beyond all rivalry.

His hand shook slightly, and his grave weary eyes softened with a new light—the light of his lost youth—as he bowed before her, and led her to the banqueting-chamber, where, in the autumnal day of a long-forgotten time, the song of the Diogène had echoed from the forests on his ear, and the great man in his solitude had envied the careless singer.

CHAPTER LIV.

"It is you! Ah! how glad we shall all be!" cried the wife of Valentin, in her lodge-house, dropping to the ground in her joy, a kirtle full of purple plums which she had just gathered from her sunny south wall. Her welcome was given to Tricotrin, as he came across her threshold in the fresh hour of earliest day.

"It is like a summer rain after drought to see you here again. You come so seldom now, and the people all hunger for you, ever," she pursued, laying her hands on his knapsack, and sending her children in all directions to get eggs from the hen-house, fresh honey, fresh fruits, and fresh salad, to do honor to his breakfast, with many lamentations that her husband should be already gone off to his work in the gardens, and should thus miss the pleasure of seeing the man he most loved and revered.

In the later years, Tricotrin had returned at intervals

to his once-cherished vine country; but still he came far more rarely, and for far briefer sojourn than of old.

The old familiar places had a cruelty in their beauty, a sting in their peace. And there was little save pain to be found at the river-home which he kept for grand'mère and the swallows. She derived no solace from his presence, she understood naught that he said, she would only grasp his arm with a hard nervous grip, and look straight in his eyes, with a look that made his heart ache, and mutter in his ear, "Will she never come back? will she never come back?"

Of the lost child, the people never spoke to him. Most believed her dead; some believed that worse than death had befallen her; all understood, that of her they must not question him.

He accepted the eager hospitalities of Ninette, and took a seat in the deep embrasure of the wide oak-lined window; and listened to her rapid babble of things that had chanced in the country-side since last he had been seen there; and glanced, ever and again, as he drank his coffee, at the blazoned arms and the gilded coronet without on the great gateways.

"How is it with grand'mère?" he asked her, in one of the pauses betwixt her gossipries.

Ninette shook her still comely head.

"Ah, you see it is so far, I can rarely go myself,—never, indeed, unless I have something to take down the river. When one has children!—But, indeed, one can do her no good, and she knows no one now. Manon Rixe saw her last week—so she stopped her mule to tell me,—and Manon thinks she is breaking fast. You see,—" she hesitated, she was about to add that grand'mère had never recovered the loss of the child; but she changed her phrase,—"you see she is wonderfully old; and when people have been so strong up to that age, they break all at once—so!"

And she cracked a rotten stick sharply across her knee. He was silent.

"She has everything she can wish for," pursued the wife of Valentin, in whose eyes creature-comforts made a paradise upon earth "She is well off,—you are so good

to her. It has been a brave, tough, tender soul,—hers. Those people that were children in that old revolutionary time, have something in them greater than we have, I think."

"They may well have. The Marseillaise was their cradle-song."

"I sing that to my children, when the doors are shut at night," whispered Ninette.

She had something of republican blood in her, and her great-grandfather had been slain by a Black Brunswicker in Champagne-Pouilleuse.

"Aye? Hymns forbad at noonday, are ever so sung at night; and oftentimes, what at noon would have been a lark's chant of liberty, grows at night to a vampire's screech for blood!" he murmured. "They are gay at your château up yonder?"

"Gay, indeed," assented Ninette, who,—with all her touch of republicanism, liked her own aristocrats. "The English lord always has kept a splendid house whenever he has been here: though he look so grave, and so tired, I do not think it can pleasure him much."

"He is well loved by all your people?"

"He is so. He is of few words, and proud; but he is generous and just."

"His son is not here?"

"No. The young lord is never here. Of Estmere himself they do say——"

"Say what?"

"Well—have you ever seen a wonderful creature whom they call the Duchess de Lirà?"

"I have seen her. Why?"

"She is staying up at the château. She is a very great lady, is she not?"

"She is of high station. What is it they say?"

"Oh, it may be nonsense. I do not see how we can tell. But they do say that my lord will wed with her. Paulin, the equerry, told us first; and now every one is repeating it. It may well be: she is most lovely, and his horse is always beside hers as they ride through the gates."

Tricotrin put out his hand, and thrust the half-shutter against the window.

"The light is strong," he muttered; and he continued his meal, sitting backward in the shadow, in silence.

"It may be folly," continued Ninette. "I know nothing of her, of course; she spoke gently to me, and she gave little Raoul a great gold piece. But they do say that she will only break his heart if ever she gets it. She loves to see men mad for her, they tell me. But it may be only gossip, very likely. I remember in the old time, when my lord was so much here, before he went to that kingship in the east, they were always saying he would marry this princess or the other when the great ladies visited at the château. People must talk. Do you like that shutter shut? You were always so fond of the sun."

She was absent awhile, busied in rescuing a pumpkin from the too vigorous play of her four-year-old son, on the strip of turf outside her door. When she came back she stood silent, with her hands in her sides a little while, surveying her guest; then she spoke very softly:

"Tricotrin—I wonder if you would be angered if I asked you something?"

"I am not likely to be. Try."

"Well—did you ever see in that great duchess a look of that pretty dead thing you were so good to,—of the child Viva?"

"There is a look—yes."

"Ah! I am glad to hear you say that. Valentin mocked at me. There is an enormous difference, of course; but there is a look——"

"Valentin is the wiser of the two," said Tricotrin, as he rose from the table, with a smile. "A great lady would be ill pleased to be likened to a foundling. And now, farewell. I will come back at evening to see your husband. For the present I must go visit grand'mère, since you have heard it is worse with her."

And he went, dropping into Raoul's hands, as he passed, a toy he had taken out of his knapsack—a clockwork cuirassier, who went through wondrous evolutions, and completely eclipsed the pumpkin.

An ingenious toyseller and mechanist had pressed it upon him a few days earlier, as the sole return it was in his power to render for services done, on a hot

summer night, to him in a fire that had broken out on his premises.

"Take it, I pray you," had urged the toymaker. "It is a clever puppet, and you can bestow it on some child; —you always like to give pleasure."

And Tricotrin had put it in his knapsack, knowing that to refuse were to deal pain.

Ninette stood thoughtfully regarding his shadow as he lengthened on the sunlit road. It was the first time he had ever spoken of his lost Waif.

"If the child should not be dead after all!" she mused; and she remembered that the belief in this death had gone abroad alone from what the old grand'mère had said, and that Tricotrin himself had never once spoken of her fate.

CHAPTER LV.

In the indolent summer day, some hour or more ere the fall of evening, a riding party paced slowly through one of the wooded valleys beyond Villiers.

They were above, on a steep rocky road that wound down toward the deeply-scooped dell, where a little hamlet lay; unseen under its dense chestnut and sycamore cover, and only betrayed by its roofs thrust up here and there, gray and soft in hue with the lichens, or red with their tiles that glowed under the leaves, bright as poppies underneath ferns.

The horses were somewhat tired; the dogs paused to drink thirstily from the hillside brooks; the riders went downward over the dangerous picturesque way, with that pleasant sense of languor, and content, which comes from such slight fatigue as only makes the ear more grateful for the soothing sound of falling water, and the eye more grateful for the perfect rest of dark cool green.

Their voices sank; their laughter was hushed; through the odorous scent of the dying day, heavy with the open-

ing buds of night-blossoming flowers, and the crushed heart of wild fruits, fallen overripe, they rode on silently.

As they went, from the valley far down below there rose the faint echoes of music, as a song rises up from the leafy hedge-sheltered nest of a bullfinch. Aerial, subdued, exquisitely delicate, it mingled, as its notes ascended, with all the sweet sounds of the earth; the brook's bubble, the leaves' murmur, the chime of sheep's bells, the singing of grasshoppers; blending with all, broken by none.

Involuntarily they checked their horses; and listened, midway down the descent.

"A French Rubezahl!" said one.

"An Orpheus of the Loire," added another.

"Hush, hush!" said the foremost of them. "It must be the Straduarius!"

"Whose?" they asked

She struck her whip with a gesture of annoyance against the bole of the tree she passed.

"A Straduarius, or,—some other perfect violin. One can tell that even here."

"But you said *the* Straduarius, madam? Who is the marvelous player?"

"I have no telescope to ascertain! We shall see in the valley."

Her host riding by her side, looked at her in a certain perplexity.

"It is Tricotrin, I will wager," said the Marquis de Valdanha farther behind. "Who else would play so to those villagers at our feet?"

"Tricotrin?" murmured Estmere, "Tricotrin? I have heard that word of late——"

"Who has not?" laughed the other.

"Tricotrin?" repeated Estmere, thoughtfully. "That is not a real name?"

"Is it not? It is one the people love as they love the Marseillaise. He is well known hereabouts: you must have met with him."

"I have done so. He is an ally of Lélis A man of peculiar life, if I were told aright?"

"A man with the wit of a Piron, the politics of a Jean

Jacques, the eloquence of a Mirabeau, the utopia of a Vergniaud!—a man with the head of a god and the blouse of a workman, the brain of a scholar and the life of a scamp, the soul of a poet and the schemes of a socialist."

"I see!"

"A cosmopolitan——"

"That is—speaks the tongues of all nations, and keeps the laws of none!"

"A character——"

"Who has lost the fact ere he gains the title!"

"An universal genius——"

"Who is of equally universal inutility!"

"A republican——"

"Who finding labor distasteful preaches the community of goods, and the equalization of riches! Thanks: you have sketched me the man in four phrases."

"And you have slandered him, my lord, in four epigrams!" said the Duchess de Lirà beside him, interrupting their converse.

He glanced at her with increasing surprise.

"I would slander no one, even in jest," he said gravely. "You know this—musician?"

"I know something of him,—all France does," she answered him; and the woman of the world felt her cheek redden and her conscience smite her, at the first evasion of truth made to the first man she loved. Such semi-falsehoods she and all her kind used by the score every day, dainty masks in the masked ball of life; but—to lie, to touch the shadow of a lie, with *him*? She felt as though she had sinned against him.

"I must know something also, since he has interest for you," he said, with a certain wonder still on him as to what this interest could be. "I confess to have no special regard in usual for enthusiasts and eccentrics; the brass slipper, abandoned on the brink of the volcano of originality, is commonly typical of the forsaken common sense that is left behind in the plunge of your Empedocles of Fanaticism! And the man who turns his back on the world, has generally seen the world's back ere he does so!"

"You are unjust," she said, curtly. "It is precisely these men who free the world!"

"What! Must one have rent the decencies of moral order ere one can cut the withes of illiberal thought?"

"That is a satire; not an argument. Does he of necessity violate moral order, because he breaks through social conventionalities? Yours is an assumption, not a deduction."

"Possibly: but I confess that I fail to see the inevitable relationship of a coat out at elbows with a mind out of the common; and I do not admire emancipators, whose first emancipated captives are their own passions and fancies from the limbo of law!"

"There spoke all the prejudices of your Order!"

"Prejudices in favor of social decencies?—they are like prejudices in favor of cleanliness;—beggars marvel that we care for our baths, but is that an argument against ablution?"

"Prejudices!—because you assume that a man who is eccentric must needs be likewise immoral; as you would assume, I suppose, that a man who is poor in purse must of necessity be also filthy in person. I do not perceive the inevitable connection."

The path had suddenly narrowed so that but one rider could pass at a time; her horse preceded his, and the discussion was broken.

"She betrays an almost personal interest in this vagabond," meditated Estmere, restlessly. "What can she know of him?—what link can they possibly have in common?"

It was this wonder which, unknown to him, had lent an unaccustomed acerbity to the enunciation of his patrician distaste for the levities and laxaties of eccentric genius.

For the first time she had differed with him: for the first time she had flung at his Order a phrase that spoke of it as kindred to him, but as alien to her.

"It must be but a woman's caprice," he mused, as he followed her. "What tie can that brilliant creature have with the vagaries of bohemianism?"

She, herself, went onward with a strange emotion at

her heart: she felt as though she were, in some sort, traitress to them both; she recognized even at that distance, with unerring instinct, the silvery melodies of the violin; she thought of the time when that music had preceded the grape-laden wagons of the vintage-feast, and the great noble who was now her host had cried, "She cannot be of the People!"

The music still stole up from the valley, toward which they drew nearer with every step that their animals set into the deep wet moss of the hillside.

On her face an unusual softness, an unwonted regret deepened as she heard. She knew that she had two sins upon her, sins of the coward and of the traitor:—false shame and long ingratitude. Sins low, and dastardly, and unworthy of her!—sins for which her conscience smote her heavily.

Since the eyes of Estmere had met hers, new thoughts had stirred in her: the ice of the world's frost had melted in great part from her; she had been moved to deeper thought, quickened to warmer feeling, than she would have imagined it possible she could stoop to from the elevation of her superb disdain.

Because she herself had learned the meaning of love, she had felt wherein to love she had been traitress. Because she herself had learned to desire a tenderness withheld, she had seen where to tenderness she had been false and full of cruelty.

All things had fallen to her hands in lavish gifts, save this one thing she craved; in its denial it taught her a mercy that her life had been without from the earliest days, when she had torn down with childish hands a score of summer lilies that she might triumph in the mock wealth of gold their broken stamens yielded her.

Yet the nobler feeling was not without its baser to alloy it. There was shame—of which in turn she was ashamed—that this bitter past she loathed could never be effaced. There was the intolerable dread lest when she passed—as pass she must—through the valley where he played, one look upon her face should show old memories of the player. And in her own wayward fashion she had deep attachment to him still: his voice could move her,

his regard could touch her still, as those of a deserted husband stir the half-dormant soul of a woman who has long forsaken, and forgotten him, in the dazzling oblivion of a far-distant life.

As the wife loves no more, yet still half vaguely regrets; would abhor to return, yet half wistfully repents of desertion; so did she, whenever she met the gaze of the savior whom she had denied.

She shuddered as their cavalcade wound down into the hollow of the valley, and the little hamlet lying in it came into their full view.

"Ah-ha! There is King Tricotrin!" cried the rider who had spoken of him. "I thought so; with all his Court about him—look well, Estmere, you will see the happiest man on earth."

Estmere glanced at the Duchess de Lirà as he answered:

"Then I shall see the man who has fewest responsibilities. Possibly your hero recognizes none? It is the way of his fraternity."

"You forget the dead well in the stone-mason's court, my lord; and what you were pleased then to grant was 'heroism.'"

She spoke quickly, and with bitterness, stung by his tone into recalling the scene, whose recollection had escaped him at the moment.

He started, and bowed his head.

"I had indeed forgot it. I thank you for the reminder. The man who could so imperil his life for a fellow-creature must have courage, and therefore nobility, in him."

"But it cannot be allowed, I suppose, for all that, to counterbalance the misdemeanor of being a bohemian! A decorous citizen would have probably stood on the brink, and not have presumed to interfere so rashly with the designs of 'Providence!'"

"You are pleased to be sarcastic," he replied to her, with some tinge of impatience. "I trust that I should be the last to depreciate so generous, so grand an action; but, at the same time, I admit that I have known very high deeds of courage, even of self-devotion, done by men who had *very little sterling* worth in them. Are all the

private soldiers of an army heroes, with martyrs' souls, think you? Indeed, we know them as the dregs of the worst part of a nation; yet, is there a battle-field or a campaign that does not yield us hundreds of examples of splendid daring, and even of infinite self-sacrifice? It seems, then, that the deliverer of the stone-mason was known to you at the time of that accident? I was unaware of that, or I should still better have comprehended your fear for him."

She understood the surprise, the bewilderment, the vague sense of suspicion and of wonder which spoke in his words. She could have bitten her lips through for having recalled this incident to him.

"Better have comprehended them?" she repeated, with an effort that was successful to answer him with no trace of embarrassment. "What! Is it so unintelligible, then, that one can have some feeling in our world for those in peril, some sympathy in our own empty egotism, with honor, energy, and endurance?"

He regarded her earnestly.

"If the Duchess de Lirà," he replied, at length, "have too well succeeded in persuading the world that she is heartless and pitiless, she cannot complain. She has striven studiously to misrepresent herself. I, for one at the least, shall rejoice to believe her self-slandered."

She made no response.

At that moment another sharp bend in the path brought them in full view of the village, and the young nobleman, who had called him "King Tricotrin," challenged their attention afresh, and pointed out, with his riding-whip, the high red roof and the brown wooden gallery of the village tavern, half-buried in hollyhocks, and cherry-trees, and climbing gourds, where Tricotrin was playing to the crowd.

A small hushed crowd of villagers, old men and old women, maidens and mothers, strong men and little children; all the dwellers of the valley, who, at the first notes of the violin, had left their spinning-wheels, their house-work, their seat in the sun, their play with the dogs, their love-whispers under the boughs, and had gathered about him hushed and entranced.

The valley was full of loveliness, of poetry, of pastoral peace; it was as a Theocritan idyl, as a Cuyp's conception, in the full luscious light of the declining day. But, there were in the lives that peopled it, exceeding labor, infinite pain, pressure of hunger oftentimes, continual toil that dulled the senses to the beauty around, fatigue that had no haven of rest to which to look.

Therefore they needed him, therefore they needed his music to raise their hearts from the earth that they tilled, to give them ears for the voices of winds and of waters, to translate to them the unknown tongues of the flowers, to pierce the deadened heaviness of souls slumbering from the stupor of overconstant travail. Therefore they needed him; and he gave them what they needed, as he had given to the people who loved him through so many seasons of so many years.

Vainly had kings, and those who served kings, sought to win him to bring that melody to palaces. He would not take it thither. He kept it for those in whose gray, hard, aching lives the pulse of joy was still, the sense of beauty numb; till, beneath its spells, those pulses quickened once again, that long-dulled sense revived.

The thyrsus of Dionysus was not wanted where the roses, and the lilies, and the myrtles blossomed; where the young goat browsed off sweet thyme shoots, and the earth was purple with trailing vines. It was the black sea-circled rock, the salt-marsh, where the water-bird moaned in loneliness, the parched plain, on whose sands the slave sank dead, that the wand of the Wine-God touched, and made laugh out in loveliness.

The only road through the valley homeward to Villiers led directly past the doorway where the player stood. She would have given years of her life not to have passed him there and thus; but she was a woman of the world, she was a graceful actress; she chose rather to trust to her own power of self-control, than to risk exciting comment and surprise—perchance suspicion—by any evidence of the reluctance that she felt.

"Let us see this marvelous musician; let us hear him nearer still," urged one of the great ladies of the party to the young Marquis de Valdanha: and with one consent

the band of riders reined up as they passed the sign of the Silver Stag, swinging above its gourds, and fruit-trees, and blossoming syringa.

Tricotrin played on as though he saw none of them, with his head bent over his bow, and his face shaded by the broad leaf of his hat. He had recognized them even while they had been far distant on the hillside path.

"Good day, Tricotrin!" cried Valdanha, with careless good humor. "You have played for the villagers. Now play for their seigneur"

The music ceased Tricotrin lifted his head with a smile.

"Good day, Valdanha! I play for the millions—not for the units!"

And he laid his fiddle down behind him, on the oak settle of the porch. The people fell aside; the horses grouped around the doorway; he uncovered his head to the women, where he stood with the careless grace that was as natural to him as it is to a noble untamed forest beast.

"Nonsense!" cried the young noble, pressing forward, not knowing with whom he had to deal. "Your music is worthy of Paganini, of Bamboche; do not deny it to us!"

And he cast his purse at the feet of the violin player.

"You have dropped something," said Tricotrin, quietly, lifting the purse up to its owner on the end of his bow.

Valdanha laughed, a little discomfited.

"Pooh! Keep it," he said, with a certain embarrassment. "We give a hundred times what is in it every week to an opera-singer, who has not a hundredth part of your genius."

Tricotrin laughed in answer—a scornful amusement in the laughter.

"You of the imperial court think everything is to be bought and sold?—even your own wives! Well, my music is out of the fashion; it is not to be had for coin. Take your purse up, my young sir."

'Not I!" said the marquis, pettishly, as he reined his se back, angered to be made absurd in the eyes of his panions.

"Very well, then; take it, old Yetta," said Tricotrin, tossing it to the oldest woman in the village group, an octogenarian, whose sons had all been slaughtered in Africa. "It is not the first time alms-giving has been born out of pique. I suppose one need not quarrel with the root in face of the result. The edelweiss springs out of Alpine ice——"

They were silent; regarding him with the languid wonder, the serene curiosity, of men and women ill used to any failure in deference shown to them, yet attracted by the promise of some new and singular thing.

The Duchess de Lirà alone kept aloof, letting her horse nibble at the shoots of the drooping lime-boughs, and looking herself upward to their pyramids of starry blossom.

"But will you only play for the peasantry or for the populace?" asked Estmere, drawing nearer, remembering his latest interview with the man whom he mistrusted as a character, and regarded as a vagabond, yet who interested him despite himself.

Tricotrin, at length, met his eyes;—in his own laughed his brilliant enigmatical smile.

"Will you tell me who want to be played to more? Music is education."

"Certainly. But—no ignorant mind, no untrained ear, can appreciate melodies as perfect as yours seem to be?"

"Can an ignorant, or an untrained brain follow the theory of light, or the metamorphosis of plants?—yet it may rejoice in the rays of a summer sun, in the scent of a nest of wild flowers! So may it do in my music. Shall I ask higher payment than the God of the sun and the violets asks for himself?"

Estmere looked at him with an increasing interest.

"A noble answer," he said, with a bend of his haughty head. "But still, despite this, you must sometimes desire a more appreciative audience?"

"Appreciative! Oh-hè! how shall we call that? There are many kinds of appreciation. The man of science appreciates when he marvels before the exquisite structure of the sea-shell, the perfect organism of the flower; but the young girl appreciates, too, w

holds the shell to her ear for its music, when she kisses the flower for its fragrance. Appreciation! It is an affair of the reason, indeed; but it is an affair of the emotions also."

"And you prefer what is born of the latter?"

"Not always; but for my music I do. It speaks in an unknown tongue. Science may have its alphabet, but it is feeling that translates its poems. Delaroche, who leaves off his work to listen; Descamps, in whose eyes I see tears; Ingres, who dreams idyls while I play; a young poet whose face reflects my thoughts, an old man whose youth I bring back, an hour of pain that I soothe, an hour of laughter that I give;—these are my recompense. Think you I would exchange them for the gold showers and the diamond boxes of a Farinelli?"

"Surely not. All I meant was that you might gain a world-wide celebrity did you choose——"

"Gain a honey-coating that every fly may eat me and every gnat may sting? I thank you. I have a taste to be at peace, and not to become food to sate the public famine for a thing to tear."

Estmere smiled; he did not understand the man who thus addressed him, but he was attracted despite all his strongest prejudices.

"You are right! Under the coat of honey is a shirt of turpentine. Still—to see so great a gift as yours wasted——"

"Wasted? Because the multitudes have it, such as it is, instead of the units? Droll arithmetic! I am with you in thinking that minorities should have a good share of power, for all that is wisest and purest is ever in a minority, as we know; but I do not see, as you see, that minorities should command a monopoly—of sweet sounds or of anything else."

"I spoke to the musician, not to the politician," said Estmere, with the calm, chill contempt of his colder manner:—the cold side of his character was touched, and his sympathies were alienated at once.

Tricotrin, indifferent to the hint as to the rebuff, looked *at him* amusedly.

"*Oh*, I know you well, Lord Estmere; I told you so

not long ago, to your great disgust. You and your Order think no man should ever presume to touch politics unless his coat be velvet, and his rent-roll large, like yours But, you see, we of the *école buissonnière* generally do as we like; and we get pecking at public questions for the same reason as our brother birds peck at the hips and the haws—because we have no granaries as you have. You do not like Socialism? Ah! And yet affect to follow it."

"I!" Estmere looked at this wayside wit, this wine-house philosopher, with a regard that asked plainly, "are you fool or knave?"

"To be sure," answered Tricotrin. "You have chapel and chaplain yonder at your château, I believe? The Book of the Christians is the very manual of Socialism: '*You* read the gospel, Marat?' they cried. 'To be sure,' said Marat. 'It is the most republican book in the world, and sends all the rich people to hell.' If you do not like my politics, *beau sire*, do not listen to the Revolutionist of Galilee."

What Estmere would have answered was never heard. At that moment the Duchess de Lirà turned her horse's head quickly, and glanced at Tricotrin with a swift flashing regard, that conveyed all to him, naught to others.

"Have you no word for me?"

She spoke on an impulse, half of remorseful shame for her own silence, half of unreasonable feminine impatience at the absence of all recognition from him. She knew that his abstinence from it was out of noble delicacy toward her, generous submission to her will and to her welfare; she would have been incensed had he claimed intimacy with her, yet she was irritated that he could thus ignore her presence.

With the remorseless vanity of a beautiful wayward woman, she could not bear to see indifference even in one to whose peace it was indispensable, and in whom her pride refused to acknowledge before the world a friend. This alienation between them had been from her own wish, by her own work: yet his acceptance of it always stung her with a vivid sense of humiliation.

Therefore, though to pass him as a stranger was what

she had desired, her self-love and her remorse forced her to break through the barrier she had herself imposed: she voluntarily drew all eyes upon her, as with something of the enchanting petulance of her early years she asked:

"Have you no word for me?"

He uncovered his head to her again, and smiled.

"Many words, madam, if you wish for them; but my phrases are not the chocolate-almonds palatable to great ladies. Besides! are *you* so unaristocratic as to remember an old debt? What will these noblemen think of you?"

Estmere's regard was fastened on them both with a surprise he did not attempt to veil; what she did, what she said, had an interest for him no other living being's acts and words possessed, and he beheld with no less disquietude than amazement this address, to a lawless bohemian, from a woman whom even her own society found so languidly cold, so mercilessly scornful.

She, a patrician, as proud as himself, far aloof from all weakness of her sex or derogation to her dignity, yet had some close bond in common with a strolling musician, a roaming eccentricity, a scamp in a linen blouse, with a monkey in his pocket, and the salt of a lawless wit on his tongue!

Tricotrin divined the thought in his mind, and turned toward him.

"I said so! Madam, you will lose my lord's esteem forever if you do not take care. Earl Eustace, see here; long years ago, when this fair empress, whom you know now, was childish enough to object to a premature death, I chanced to save her life one summer's day; by mere accident and without risk, so that she has nothing to thank me for,—still, she remembers it. She errs to her Order in harboring such a plebeianism as gratitude; but in consideration that her life has turned out worth having, you may perhaps be brought in time to understand and to pardon it!"

The light sarcasm, the easy disowning of all his vast claims, the swift desire to save her even from the passing suspicion of her companions, touched all her latent con-

science, stung all her latent generosity, touched and stung them as no assertion of his rights and of her debt could ever have done.

Her higher nature flashed out in the reply she gave, as she glanced from the one to the other:

"Were it possible that I could incur my Lord Estmere's censure for a sentiment that the very beasts and birds can feel toward their benefactors, I could not lose his esteem so utterly as he would assuredly lose mine!"

She paused suddenly, her face hot with shame; she felt the poverty, the futility of any acknowledgment to him, while still actually she denied him, like the apostle who was ashamed of his Master,—while still, untold, unguessed, the width and the depth of his benefits to her lay buried for sake of her pride.

Estmere bowed to her,—in his heart dissatisfied and perplexed.

"The duchess is right; I should indeed merit her disdain were I capable of such baseness. In her childhood you saved her life? The world is greatly your debtor. May I ask how it chanced?"

"Ouf! nothing to speak of; she was lost in a wood, and would have made a choice meal for a wolf; that is all. Mistigri here had more to do with the rescue than I. The world my debtor! A pretty phrase from a great lord's lips; but was it the debtor of Antiochus for Cleopatra? These beautiful women are no good to the world. they are what the peasants here think comets are:—dazzling messengers of evil, that bring fire, and war, and pestilence in their train. The beauty of woman,—it is the passion-flower of our lives; but it has poison in one leaf of it, and healing in another. Madame de Lirà is your guest?"

In the quick transition there was a sequence of thought which Estmere caught, though it was unuttered; his own impulse to let himself be beguiled by this beauty, whether it brought him the poisoned or the healing touch, spurred his comprehension.

He gave a cold assent to the question, wondering still what manner of man this could be who talked thus at the door of a peasant's ale-house, and who presumed to con

vey to himself a veiled warning against a passion whose existence no sign even had ever betrayed to its object.

"You stay in the valley yourself, Tricotrin?" asked Valdanha, at the same moment.

"Pardieu! I never stay anywhere!" laughed Tricotrin. "The *pérégrinomanie*, as sturdy Guy Patin styled it, is the only salt of life; always on the wing, like a swallow—it is to keep perpetual youth, perpetual spring. You flee from the winter, and follow where the sun goes. Do you know, to my thinking, the Peruvian's notion of paradise eclipses every other;—endless, buoyant movement, through never-ending fields of light! There is a grand conception!—how vulgar beside it is the Christian, how unpoetic even the Hellenic, picture of immortality!"

"You are always a wanderer?" asked Estmere, impelled, against his own will, to interest himself in one who half offended, half pleased, half alienated, half attracted him.

"To be sure I am. Why not?"

"There would be scant obedience to the duties of citizenship if all men were like you," said the other with a smile.

"And no opportunity for an Oligarchy, which you would resent still more! Well—see you here, my Lord Earl. You are born in the purple, you have the scepter of power, the Aaron's rod of wealth, you can summon all fair things about you, you can have all the delights of the soul and the senses; and if Satiety curse them all for you, it is only because you begin them too early, and ask more of them than it is reasonable to ask of any things of earth. You possess all you desire; and have no foe to rob from you: save the devil of disgust, that hides underneath all possession. But if you were a poor man, with your soul and your senses all quickened, but no incantation rod of gold in your hand, it would be different with you; you might like then to find your kingdom in your liberty, your treasure-house in the light of the sun, your artists in the colors of the sky, your empire in the stretch of forest, sea, or desert; your poem in a flower, your music in a torrent, your temple in a palm grove. Have you ever thought of that? Have you ever thought

how dear, to men who have not wealth, are color, sound, and sense and dreams?—the miraged cities that only those who travel in long drought behold as compensation. You need them not—you live in palaces."

Estmere listened, in a grave wondering courtesy: the poetic nature scarcely belonged to him; he had led the life which kills it, his temperament was that of the statesman, not of the speculator, of the lawgiver, not of the visionary. He could not wholly comprehend the tenor of the fantastic, vivid, half-metaphorical answer given him; yet there was too much sympathy in his mind—from which no noble thought was alien—for him to ridicule or slight it.

"You are happy," he said, with a sigh that was almost of envy. "There is no wand of gold that summons such fair shapes as can the poet's power of fancy. Only—I incline to think you live twenty centuries too late, or—twenty centuries too early."

Viva turned on him a swift and eager glance.

"Of course!" she said, with a certain emotion, whose meaning he could not analyze. "Was there ever yet a man of genius who was not either the relic of some great dead age, or the precursor of some noble future one, in which he alone has faith?"

"Chut!" said Tricotrin, rapidly; he could not trust himself to hear her speak in his own defense. "Fine genius mine! To fiddle to a few villagers, and dash color on an ale-house shutter! I have the genius of indolence, if you like; as to my belonging to a by-gone age,—well! I am not sure that I have not got the soul in me of some barefooted friar of Moyen Age, who went about where he listed, praying here, laughing there, painting a missal with a Pagan love-god, and saying a verse of Horace instead of a chant of the Church. Or, may be, I am more like some Greek gossiper, who loitered away his days in the sun, and ate his dates in the market-place, and listened here and there to a philosopher, and—just by taking no thought—hit on a truer philosophy than came out of Porch or Garden. Ah! my Lord of Estmere, you have two hundred servants over there at Villiers, I have *been told*; do you not think I am better

served here by one little brown-eyed, brown-cheeked maiden, who sings her Béranger like a lark, while she brings me her dish of wild strawberries? There is fame too for you,—his—the King of the Chansons! When a girl washes her linen in the brook,—when a herdsman drives his flock through the lanes,—when a boy throws his line in a fishing-stream,—when a grisette sits and works at her attic lattice,—when a student dreams under the linden leaves,—he is on their lips, in their hearts, in their fancies and joys. What a power! What a dominion! Wider than any that emperors boast!"

"And," added Estmere, with a smile, "if you were not Tricotrin you would be Béranger?"

"Assuredly. A lyric poet, if he have art, or rather nature enough in him, to wind himself into the lives and the souls of the people, reigns as no Alexander, no Cæsar, no Sulla ever did yet. A statesman rules,—ay, for a lifetime; but it is only the poet whose scepter stretches over generations unborn. But good day to you—or rather good night. I have no business to weary you with words, if I do not give you music."

"But will you not give us both?"

"No," he answered abruptly, and, lifting his hat to the women of the group, he turned with a rapid movement and went within. The memory was keen in him of the day when he had played to the little child that had dropped her lilies and forget-me-nots to listen.

She who once—so long ago!—had been that child, happy in her floral wealth, let him go from her in silence, with only a courteous gesture of farewell. Conscience was not dead in her; but it was numb, vacillating, bewildered; it allowed her passively to accept the tacit sacrifice made to her. It allowed her to acquiesce in his acceptance of her abandonment, in his self-negation for her sake.

Yet she felt debased, unworthy, a coward to the core; she started like a guilty creature when her host addressed her as they rode away from the tavern porch, whose golden sunflowers the evening sun was just commencing to redden into stars of fire.

"A strange character,—this man?" he said to her. "A genius, no doubt; but a genius wasted."

"No doubt," she answered, with a certain contemptuous satire, in which her own emotions found alike mask and refuge. "He makes no money by it!"

"That was not my meaning," replied Estmere, annoyed at the misconstruction. "It is not for gold that the highest intelligences labor in any age. But talents thrown away upon a wineshop audience are still less profitably employed than wrapped in the napkin of the parable."

"The wineshop audience feels!" she answered, with that occasional ironic scoff at the patrician order which would now and then break out in her, and seem to show some latent though repelled sympathy with the bohemianism of another class. "Can we say so much for the vapid circle of a palace drawing-room, murmuring scientific jargon, and tapping faint applause with fans and gloves!"

"I think we may,—sometimes," said Estmere, coldly. "I cannot myself perceive why educated faculties in the admirer, make discriminative admiration less honorable to its object than a clown's grin, or a milkmaid's tears. It is the cant of the age to presuppose the monopoly of all sympathies by the uncultured classes; now, I believe that there are no classes more utterly unsympathetic on the earth. Sympathy has its birth in the mind yet more than in the heart;—the sympathy of the boor is restricted to his own hearth; it is only the sympathy of the scholar that extends to things totally opposed, and persons entirely alien, to him."

"Yet there are scholars who, if they climb the ice-mountain of their own ambition, care not whom the avalanches slay in the villages below."

"Well,—that is not a worse, it is to an extent a higher, form of egotism than the peasant's, who, if his own hayrick be not in flames, cares not what torch of war desolates the neighboring plain. But can you tell me no more of this man—Tricotrin? Tricotrin! it is not a name."

"I have never known him go by any other. No,—I can tell you very little of him. He is a logogriph, whose leading word I have never guessed."

"Yet he saved your life, it appears?"

"That is a sarcasm! He saved my life certainly; but I was an infant, I have no recollection of the circumstance; I have merely heard of it——"

"And you know nothing of him?—I mean of his antecedents, his modes of life, his pursuits, of what first made him the bohemian and the eccentricity that he is now?"

"I have no idea. I have never had any means of ascertaining. I know that the Duke de Lirà held him in high esteem for some great service rendered in an insurrection; I know that he is a man of infinite wit, infinite resources, infinite nobility of feeling,—that is the extent of my knowledge. I greatly doubt, also, if any one's influence is greater. He is 'Tricotrin,' the people say. Both he and they seem to consider all uttered in that word which you find so singular."

"I find it singular because it is so evidently but a pseudonym——"

"I never thought of it as such. There are strange names among the French *bas peuple.*"

"But that man does not belong to the '*bas peuple*' of any nation."

"By his look—no. Yet—I never heard anything that suggested his belonging to any other grade than that which he assumes; although——"

"Although what?"

"Although,—is not his tenderness for the people rather that of one who has voluntarily associated himself with them than that of one who naturally belongs to them?"

"This was my own thought. Would it not be possible to learn something of him?"

"I do not think so; I imagine no one would more acutely resent any attempt to penetrate his past."

She spoke hurriedly, for the first time losing the easy and negligent self-possession she had preserved throughout the conversation. She felt an intense anxiety to divert his thoughts from the subject, and his inquiries from the fortunes, of Tricotrin; and she allowed her anxiety to overcome the tact and facility of her assumed indifference. To penetrate his past was to penetrate hers!

He perceived that restless fear; but he said nothing of it. He accepted her words in their surface-meaning, and assented to them.

"Those men," he added, "who fling away great gifts in gipsy-camps, and dash their Castalian water with pot-house drinks, are usually the heroes of adventures as amusing as, but not more reputable than, those of Gil Blas; and, though they censure the world and laugh at mankind, they have generally first been shown a jail by the one and the door by the other. 'A great Character!' says Society: when it means—'a great Scamp!'"

A hot flush of color passed over the fairness of her face; her teeth set.

"You love to turn an epigram, Lord Estmere!—and care little what you sacrifice to its points. Look in the face of that man we have left, and say—you who pride yourself on your knowledge of men—whether any single thing of shame, or of crime, or of dishonor, could go with the features you see, with the bearing that defies you, with the lion's regard that meets your own!"

He bowed his head.

"This person is fortunate in his interest for you—proud in his defender."

Then silence ensued between them; and lasted until they rode up to the doors of Villiers.

CHAPTER LVI.

"I HAVE lied to him!" she thought, dropping her head on her hands when she reached her own chambers. She had been ashamed of the sin of ingratitude, of the sin of cowardice, but she was far more bitterly ashamed of the sin of falsehood,—because this last sin was against the man in whose sight she desired not to have only the semblance, but the reality, of perfect truth, and purity, and honor.

She *had said no* absolute word of untruth to him, per-

haps; it was true that she knew nothing of the whence and the whither of the one of whom they had spoken. While protected by Tricotrin she had been too young to question the life that seemed almost divine in her eyes; since she had quitted him the memory of it had been blotted out by a thousand more vivid interests and more selfish pursuits. It was true she knew nothing—never had asked aught—of this fate which from her childhood upward had been too familiar in her eyes to have any aspect of strangeness or of mystery.

She had adhered to the letter of the truth; but that was all;—in spirit, in effect, in purpose, she had lied to Estmere; lied to the man whose regard pierced the coldness and the vanity of her life, as the sun's rays of the mature year pierce the snows and the ice of the mountain-peaks, and who called the long-buried beauties of her gentler nature into fresh existence, as those rays recall to blossom the crocus, and the gentian, and the edelweiss.

Her sin against him, as weighed with her sin against the other, was as a grain of wheat beside a millstone; yet the life-long guilt had left her without remorse, without regret, almost without moral consciousness of it; the guilt of the evasion, the concealment, made her feel covered with shame, and forever without fitness for him.

He had no right to her confidence; she owed him no allegiance; he had no title to search out her past;—but these sophisms availed nothing to reconcile her with herself.

In that moment she was utterly base in her own judgment; she had lost dignity, and purity, and truth, and even courage; she had been a coward! There was nothing viler or lower in her esteem; and in that one hour she saw down into the depths of her own heart, and saw there weakness and worthlessness, that made the haughty duchess, who exercised so superb a power over the souls of men, immeasurably beneath the child that had learned her simple lessons of loyalty and justice from the lips of an old peasant woman.

"I cannot deceive *him!*" she thought, "and yet, he *must* never—he shall never—know!"

A more poignant shame than even that of falsehood

smote her as she mused thus; a shame that made her ready to tear her very heart out of her living body,—the shame that she gave her love to a man who had never uttered to her one word of passion or of tenderness.

"I fascinate him,—I perplex him,—I gain his censure,—I excite his scorn,—I force his admiration;—but are any of *those* love?" she thought, in the bitterness of her soul.

And her head sank, and her eyes grew blind with tears, and her life ached with vain vague longing.

Then the imperious coquetry in her rose, and she looked at her own face; and her eyes flashed, her mouth laughed in proud resolve and consciousness of power.

"He *shall* love me!" she said half aloud, in her closed teeth: it was as much a menace as a vow. She had said it often, when but vanity alone had been involved in its realization; she said it now with all her soul set upon its fruition She drove aside her repentance, her self-condemnation, her sickening sense of danger and of error: and summoned her women about her, and gave herself into their hands, and had the gold powder scattered over tresses brighter than itself, and gossamer laces cast over beauties which they half veiled only wholly to enhance, and the diamonds girdle a form fit for the cestus of Venus, and a single scarlet flower set to glow against the whiteness of her bosom.

"He *shall* love me!" she thought, as she glanced at the mirrors ere she swept from her chambers, voluptuously lovely as any goddess that ever passed through the Ivory Gate to haunt the dreams of poet or of painter.

But—Estmere never had feared her as he feared her sensuous grace, her intoxicating charm, that night.

It was the scarlet flower of passion, of pride, of victory, of delirium, that glowed within her breast:—not the white flower of purity and of truth.

The one had already betrayed him; the other he had sought as the knight sought Yolande with the Yellow Hair—in vain.

Still he loved her, though he withheld the knowledge of his subjection from her; though he resisted, and scorned, and feared the emotion that possessed him. We

concealed it jealously, because he mistrusted her; mistrusted that she might fool him as she fooled all men; that she had danger, and evil, and cruelty in her, as have all things dominated by vanity.

Also, he mistrusted himself; he was no longer young: with this boy's play of love he had had naught to do, since it had dealt him back the gray ashes of a desolated honor, in return for his fair gold of faith. It seemed to him as a madman's folly to suppose that he alone could succeed, where all others had failed, in awakening tenderness and fealty from such a woman as this. He had distrust of her; distrust of himself.

The proud noble could not sue to be rejected; the grave statesman could not bend his neck in an unvalued homage; the superb gentleman could not stoop in vain, and give himself to the gay languid disdain of a successful and sated coquette.

He loved her with a passion only stronger and deeper for its suppression; but still stronger than itself were his fears of hers, and his own self-respect. He would not give up his honor for her wanton play, his dignity for her captious triumph.

Moreover, a certain vague but painful suspicion had arisen in him with the reticence that he had noted in her on the subject of that tavern-musician whom she defended, yet ignored. No single trace of embarrassment and of reluctance that she had displayed had been lost upon him. He perceived that there was here some memory, or some circumstance, that she desired to thrust away; some bond between her and this wanderer that she wished unrevealed, undivined. His own mind was too lofty, his own thoughts too noble, for any coarse or base suggestion to present itself to him as the reason of this; still the fancy—for it was scarcely more—haunted and troubled him.

He loved her:—hence he would have had her life stainless as the driven snow, and open before him as the leaves of a book. And he felt instinctively that it never would be thus.

Ere he had met her, she had lived through many seasons of victory, of brilliancy, of luxury, of celebrity; in

them how many dead passions, dead joys, dead pleasures, dead pains, might lie of which he could never know? They said that she had never loved: but who could tell? —who could be certain that her scorn for all her facile conquests might not be born from some secret and silent emotion of which she was ashamed? some impulse that could not be indulged without derogation from her code, degradation to her rank! This well might be, without shame to her:—this stranger might hold the clew to whatsoever the secret was; might, even, have been the object of such an attachment. Thus he mused in the self-torture with which the wisest torments himself when once the love of woman has entered into him.

He was riding slowly through the outlying woods of his estate, in the freshness of the very early day. Some forest question had needed his presence there, and he had been glad of the stillness, the loneliness, the freedom from his duties as a host.

"What he would have given for youth!" he thought, "for the years of his son's youth!"

That futile desire had never touched his life before; it was spent in grave ambitions, high pursuits, fair fame; it was too lofty for envy, too serene for regret:—it was only now, when the weakness of passion undermined it, that he felt, with a restless weariness, sorrow for the many years that had slipped by and never brought him a joy; desire for the glow and glory of the hopes which, with him, had died out so long ago, crushed like bruised asphodels in the white false hand of a woman.

A sigh escaped him; a quick, low, impatient sigh of pain:—had he dwelt in peace through all these many seasons only to fall before this sorceress at the last!

He started, as in answer to that sigh a voice challenged him in what he had believed to be so perfect and profound a solitude.

"You are weary, Earl Eustace, and on a midsummer morning, too! For shame! Ah! the grass-wreaths of the Scipii and the Julii were nearer in all their honor than the fresh Campagna grasses that boy poets wove for Nævia's or for Flora's hair; it is so to this day, is it not?"

Estmere checked his horse, and glanced around in the sun-lightened woods.

Beside him, knee-deep in flowers and ferns, with a wounded quail in his right hand, stood Tricotrin, under a group of pines, from whose boughs Mistigri was swinging.

"I have been bathing in one of your pools," pursued his trespasser, whose hair and beard still glistened with water-drops. "A little man-forgotten lake there, under the trees, that no creature ever sees save the water-fowl. You bathe in a dainty marble bath, with a fresco of Leda on the walls, I believe;—bah! my teals' and widgeons' and wild swans' Jordan is far better."

Estmere did not answer him at once; surprise at his presence there, annoyance at the audacious freedom of the address, and the latent attraction that this man possessed for him, all holding him silent. He had desired to meet with Tricotrin again; but he was scarcely prepared for so unceremonious a greeting.

"Good day to you," he said at length, with that cold and gentle courtesy which marked, far more definitely than other men's insolence, the differences of rank. "You have a bird there?—is it dead?"

Tricotrin looked up and laughed in his eyes, touching the little quail softly.

"You think I look like a poacher? No—the thing is living; but I found it with its wing broken—by a blow from a stick or a stone, most likely; and I shall keep it with me and cure it. '*Fratres mei*,' said François d'Assis to the birds: he was a bold man to claim brotherhood with the innocents? And he talked to them—the fool!—instead of listening. What presumption!"

"You are fond of birds and animals? you are a naturalist?"

"God be praised, no! I am fond of them, yes. How honest they are, how tender, how grateful! They do not take your benefits as so many reasons why they should cut your throat lest you should ever claim a debt against them, which men are apt to do. But a naturalist! A man who thinks himself justified in making all creation groan, if he can tickle his own vanity with one straw of

knowledge; who will give the tortures of hell to the dumb meek brutes, if so be that thereby he may gain some scrap of false science, which the future will laugh at as the present now laughs at Aristotle! No! For what do you take me?"

"For what do you bid me to take you?"

He asked the question on an impulse: he ardently desired to learn something, were it ever so little, of this wandering life, that was the entire antithesis of his own.

Tricotrin's eyes laughed again at him with their amused and sunny irony.

"Rather tell me what you select for me; I am three abominations in your sight, I fancy: a cosmopolitan, a democrat, and a vagabond—eh?"

"Surely, the cosmopolitan is a man of too high powers and gifts to be fitly associated in designation with the other two appellatives?"

"Pooh! What is there to object to in the other two, pray? David, Mithridates, Artaxerxes, Nezahualcoytl, Viriathus, scores of great kings, were vagabonds and wanderers in their novitiates; and as for democrats? well, one may have worse company, I fancy, than Buzot, Vergniaud, Milton, Hampden, and all their like, stretching up to Caius Gracchus. Not that I altogether hold with *him* for his bribes, his rancor, his corn proletariat, and other such matters——"

"You cite honorable names," answered Estmere, with a smile, unconsciously falling into his companion's vein of speech. "You forget that, for the few kings errant, there are a million of thieves and gipsies; and that for one Gracchus we get a Cinna, a Critolāus, a Glaucius, more or less miserably repeated a thousand times in every nation."

"Ay,—as for one Drusus, one Scipio, one Sempronius, and one Estmere, to whom 'nobility is obligation,' there are a million petty patricians who play at a paper-tyrannis, and disgrace the order, while they ape the ways of the great Eupatrids. But I do not see, myself, that the dignity of the original type is harmed because it is unworthily imitated. For the real *patina* of a true Correggio, you get the false glaze of ten thousand copies from the

schools; but that does not change the true Correggio's value."

Estmere bent his head in acknowledgment of the tribute to himself, which he saw was no lip service, but the offspring of a cordial sincerity; while increased surprise came on him: this man, with a democrat's codes, had none of the democrat's blind class-hatred.

"You have a silver tongue," he said, resting his eyes on his companion in grave speculation. "You, yourself, I believe, with all your professions of lawlessness, admit that 'humanity is obligation,' a law still more stringent, and far more wide-spreading. I was present when the Paris crowd worshiped you for your noble rescue of the stone-mason from the dead well."

Tricotrin gave an impatient gesture, and almost an embarrassed laugh. He hated such things as these in his life to be known or be quoted.

"Pshaw! What was that?" he cried lightly. "I did not get even a sprain. To those poor, sickly, effeminate, city-mewed Parisians, who scarce ever stir outside their barrier-walls, it might look a great feat; but to any one who knows anything of mountaineering, to any one who has hung by a rope over an alpine precipice, the mere going down into a well was a nothing at all."

Estmere smiled.

"You may undervalue the action; no one else is likely to do so. It was a very splendid result of such a union of courage and coolness as we do not very often find; and it was a great self-devotion also."

"Self-devotion? Paf! Not a bit of it. Is death such a terrible thing that we are such wonderful heroes for risking it? I am Pagan enough to deem it no such awful visitant. By-the-way, it is a sufficiently droll affair, that Christianity, which professes itself so sure of he justice of Divine judgments and of the possession of an eternal Hereafter, should be the one religion whose followers have most assiduously dressed up Death as a King of Terrors? Anomalous, assuredly."

Estmere still regarded him with earnest interest, paying little heed to what he uttered, so intent was he him-

self in speculation as to what this wanderer could possibly be.

"It was certainly you," he said, at length, "whom I met, not very long since, in Lélis' atelier, and who reminded me of my having once purchased the Attavante?"

"Yes; it was I."

"Lélis spoke of you to me with the deepest attachment, and told me the tale of that little black familiar which swings yonder. Yours is a peculiar name."

Tricotrin's eyes laughed a little.

"Is it? It is a simple one enough."

"Of what part of the country, may I ask?"

"A cosmopolitan has no country."

"But even a cosmopolitan must have parentage—race—birthplace?"

"Must he? Well, a bohemian need have none of the three. He is a great deal freer than his prototypes, the gipsies; for they are the slaves of tribe-law and blood-influence. Like Micha Hall, of Mam Tor, he can write on his tombstone, if, indeed, he care for one:

> Quid eram, nescitis;
> Quid sum, nescitis
> Ubi abii, nescitis.
> Valete!"

Estmere smiled at the epitaph; and felt himself compelled to admit the hint to discontinue his inquiries. He turned to another subject.

"The Dante had been long yours?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"Only to know if you have regretted its loss."

"I never regret anything. What is the use?"

"I merely meant, that—it would give me pleasure to restore it to you if you would permit me?"

"I never take gifts. I thank you for your intention, all the same."

"Well—will you purchase it, then, by allowing the château to hear that music which you bestow so lavishly on the tavern?"

"No," said Tricotrin, more briefly still. "I do not play

for any wage, nor in any châteaux. I play when the spirit moves me; not when men dictate."

"That is the waywardness of all genius," thought Estmere, as he answered aloud:

"It is our misfortune that you are so antagonistic to the châteaux; and—you surely find no debtor such an ingrate, no master such a tyrant, as the People?"

"Perhaps. But, rather I find it a dog, that bullies and tears where it is feared, but may be made faithful by genuine courage and strict justice shown to it."

"The experience of the musician, then, must be much more fortunate than the experience of the statesman."

"Why, yes. It is ungrateful to great men, I grant; but it has the irritation of its own vague sense that it is but their tool, their ladder, their grappling-iron, to excuse it. Still—I know well what you mean; the man who works for mankind works for a task-master, who makes bitter every hour of his life only to forget him with the instant of his death;—he is ever rolling the stone of human nature upward toward purer heights, to see it recoil and rush down into darkness and bloodshed. I know——"

Estmere's eyes still dwelt on him with keen, grave study. The desire he had to become acquainted with this man's past, and present, overcame the reluctance in him to betray what might seem curiosity or intrusion.

"I wish that you would tell me," he said, with a certain hesitation, "tell me without epigram or argument, simply how it arrives that a man of your talents and culture—as they appear to me—occupies with content a position where the world can so little perceive those powers, or offer them their due honors and awards?"

"You wish to know *that*?"

The question was rapid and stern: a look of impatience, of anger, of contempt, swept stormily over his features; but its duration was brief, his careless serenity returned again, as he answered with a laugh:

"Is there aught so wonderful that a man likes his liberty, likes to wander at his ease, likes to get riddance of the trammels of a civilization which, in multiplying wants and desires, has multiplied envy and greed?"

"That is the vagrant's excuse for preferring license to law, and theft to honest labor," said Estmere coldly His inherent distrust of a "Character" began to revive.

Tricotrin shrugged his shoulders.

"Pardie! so it is, poor simpleton. If he do not know that he who enters into crime subscribes subservience to the weightiest bondage on earth, it is because his ignorance is as strong as his lusts. And who teaches him otherwise? He beholds so many successful sins throned on high and rolling in their chariots!"

"To accuse the world of dishonesty is always the outlaw's defense of his own stolen goods," answered Estmere, in his chillest tones. "But I started no general proposition. I asked you a personal—perhaps a too curious—question. I may seem rude, I have no title to ask an answer; nevertheless, I must repeat, it is impossible for me to reconcile the great gifts you undoubtedly possess with the career you are content to pursue."

Tricotrin's eloquent eyes changed their expression many times through the few sentences. As they were concluded, his regard grew graver, though in it there still laughed the delicate, fine irony of his careless scorn.

"Well,—I will answer you, though I would not any one else. Tell me first, though, what it is you find so reprehensible in my career? Is it my consorting with a little animal who bears too close token of his relationship to us to be an agreeable object of contemplation to man?—is it because there is only virtue in your velvet, and gross guilt in my linen blouse?—is it the telling of plain truths, the calling of things simply by their names, a sin that blackened Sulla's name far more than the blood that he shed?—is it because I play to those who want amusement instead of to those who can pay for it? It is all these, I suppose; but what else?"

"Simply—that having genius you do not care to be worthy of it, and to worthily bestow it. An insolent answer, you will say; but you have demanded my opinion."

"Certainly. Well—let us see. What is bestowing it worthily? I will tell you a story.

"Once there were three handmaidens of Krishna's, in-

visible, of course, to the world of men. They begged of Krishna, one day, to test their wisdom, and Krishna gave them three drops of dew. It was in the season of drought,—and he bade them go and bestow them where each deemed best in the world.

"Now one flew earthward, and saw a king's fountain leaping and shining in the sun; the people died of thirst, and the fields and the plains were cracked with heat, but the king's fountain was still fed and played on. So she thought, 'Surely my dew will best fall where such glorious water dances?'—and she shook the drop into the torrent.

"The second hovered over the sea, and saw the Indian oysters lying under the waves, among the sea-weed and the coral. Then she thought, 'A rain-drop that falls in an oyster's shell becomes a pearl; it may bring riches untold to man, and shine in the diadem of a monarch. Surely it is best bestowed where it will change to a jewel?'—and she shook the dew into the open mouth of a shell.

"The third had scarcely hovered a moment over the parched white lands, ere she beheld a little, helpless, brown bird dying of thirst upon the sand, its bright eyes glazed, its life going out in torture. Then she thought, 'Surely my gift will be best given in succor to the first and lowliest thing I see in pain?'—and she shook the dew-drop down into the silent throat of the bird, that fluttered, and arose, and was strengthened.

"Then Krishna said that she alone had bestowed her power wisely; and he bade her take the tidings of rain to the aching earth, and the earth rejoiced exceedingly. Genius is the morning dew that keeps the world from perishing in drought. Can you read my parable?"

Estmere bowed his head; touched and rebuked by the poetic reproach.

"I do;—forgive me that I ventured to pass judgment on you."

"I forgive!" answered Tricotrin, simply; then, with the light and rapid movement that was common with him, he sprang like a deer across the freshet of water by which he stood, and, plunging into the depth of wood that lay on

its farther side, was lost from sight before the other could arrest him.

Estmere sat and gazed at the green dense wall of foliage that the young and old oaks of the forest placed between them. He was astonished, attracted, perplexed; a feeling he could not account for moved him, and filled him with a vexed impatience at his own failure, and a deepened interest in the one who had vanquished him.

There was that about this fearless grace, this poetic eloquence, this mingled pride and carelessness, the one as of a king, the other as of a gipsy, that fascinated him, were it only by sheer force of contrast; and wrung from him a reverence that he was almost tempted to ridicule, yet which he could not resist despite his own resentment of it. He was accustomed to control, to command, to dominate, to criticise men, as he who is born to rule them must ever do if he would hold a leader's place; but here was one man with whom he could do none of these,—one man who excited all his strongest prejudices, who called up all his haughtiest creeds, but who won on him, and who challenged his attention as none of his own order ever had done.

Yet he was impatient with himself for having yielded to such an influence.

"Because he has the gift of a fair tongue, and evades a direct inquiry by a poetic and fanciful allegory, is he any the truer and safer? is he any the worthier of credence?" he thought, as he rode slowly homeward through the only road intersecting the oak glades.

But, although he argued with his impulse of faith as a weakness, although he repeated to himself that the charm which had lulled his suspicions had been but the charm of an adventurer's facile and valueless eloquence, an instinct stirred in his heart—the instinct of one truthful nature's loyalty unto another—which told him still that the doubt was dishonor to the one whom it attaindered with suspicion.

"A clever actor—what more? A scholarly outlaw, cunning of fence, and with a winning tongue—that is all," he mused, and strove to believe.

But the memory of the heroism in the stone-cutter's

court rebuked him; and the skepticism engendered by the world was conquered by the native generosity within him. Instinct trusted where reason had condemned. But whether reason or instinct were the truer guide, both alike impelled him to know far more of this wanderer: both alike made him think, with the old Homeric line:

"He only is a living man; the rest are gliding shades."

CHAPTER LVII.

In the balmy rose-gardens of Villiers a group like one from the Decameron strolled, and sat, and loitered, in the warmth of a summer day.

Among those high-born, languid, amorous idlers, slaying their hours with lightest love and lightest wit, a little rabbit, white, and with fleecy hair, ran rapidly, half frightened at the novelty of its intrusion, half enchanted with the low-hanging roses, at which it nibbled hurriedly, to flee, as hurriedly, with its mouth full of rose-leaves. No one noticed it; it had its way among the buds; and ventured at last to sit demurely still, a ball of snow among the crimson blossoms.

Suddenly, and with clumsy vehemence, there rushed to chase it a large-limbed, brawny, bronzed woman of the farms, breaking in where none of her class had ever dared to stray. She caught the terrified thing, and shook it angrily; and turned her eyes, as though she also were stupefied at her own temerity, on the face of the great lady nearest her.

"Pardon, madam," she stammered, with uncouth, embarrassed eagerness. "I should lose my place if it were known I dared come in here:—but this little beast skipped from my arms as I passed the gates, and I thought it would damage the roses, and so I ran—and ran,—and I never saw where it was I came. Will you say *something* for me if they threaten me?"

The Duchess de Lirà smiled.

"Oh, yes; meanwhile I would say—do not swing that poor rabbit by its ears."

The woman shifted the rabbit at once to an easier mode of detention.

"It is very good of madam to think of the dumb brute!" she muttered, with awkward courtesy. "I should be loth to lose it; it belongs to old Virelois, and she is lonely, and makes friends of these things—but I forget, I have no business here—forgive my rudeness, madam."

And she thrust her huge coarse form through the delicate loveliness of the rose aisles; her wooden shoes clattering over the velvet sward, the white rabbit trembling in the hard grasp of her hand. She went over park, and meadow, and the stepping-stones of a brook; and threw her rabbit aside in a hutch; and entered the cool dairy-house, and sat herself down on a stool.

There was a sullen savage pleasure, and a coarse cynicism, on her face; and her wide mouth laughed with a broad hoarse laugh.

"I thought so—I thought so, when she swept past me in that carriage!" she muttered, in a brutish glee, with which envy mingled. "I said I should know that dainty face out of a million,—there was a look that *knew*, in her eyes, when I said the old granddam's name. God's mercy! that bastard a duchess!—how can it have come to pass? They said she was dead,—and we thought her in shame,—and all this while she has lived among princes. Well—I will keep my tongue till the young lord comes; but it shall go hard if I do not hurt her somehow. She to be an aristocrat—that nameless, useless, wanton, insolent thing!—it kills one with laughter only to think on it!"

And she laughed again, her hard, rough, riotous laugh, sitting there in her solitude; and she thrust over, with a savage turn of her foot, the wooden stool on which, one summer evening, the child whom she had hated had sat, and counted her magic grapes, and crowned herself with her magic jasmine.

While she thus mused, the Duchess de Lirà had gone within, for the heat grew oppressive even in those cool,

shadowy, fountain-filled rose-gardens, and was moving slowly up and down the picture-galleries, accompanied by her host.

His galleries were of great extent and value; year by year he had added to his collections, until their excellence was scarce to be surpassed; and since the early dishonor of his wedded life had made his old hereditary home distasteful to him, he had gathered together all that was richest and rarest of his possessions in this, his favorite, dwelling-place of Villiers.

As she swept to and fro them, she conversed of art, and of many things beside art, with the airy subtleties of wit that a woman of the world gains from society, as a flower gains its hues from the bees which lend it brilliancy while they steal its sweetness. With her, indeed, it was rather inborn than acquired. Without any touch of genius,—which could not arise from a temperament so volatile, so self-centered, so full of gay levity, and so devoid of impersonal sympathies as was hers,—she yet had talents of the brightest and most facile kind.

Unconsciously to herself, and unknown to others, there was sufficient of the instinct of the bohemian in her to make her quick-sighted to the weak points of the order to which she now belonged, and to supply her with delicate barbed shafts of satire to aim at them. The influence that had been so long upon her childhood had not wholly lost its effect upon her womanhood. Though all her tastes and attachments were with the rank to which she had attained, there remained sufficient in her of the temper she had caught from her earliest teacher, to lead her into wayward rebellion against some of its codes and exactions. Something of the salt of the gay trenchant sarcasms she had been fed on in her early years remained upon her lips, and not seldom seasoned what they spoke.

The diversity, the contradiction, lent a special charm to her speech, whenever her hauteur and her coquetry were both in abeyance; as they both were with Estmere.

"What golden wit she possesses!" he thought: and he was ignorant that it was but the reflex of the wit that he had once encountered in a bohemian working among the vintagers of France.

Minds like Tricotrin's scatter their gold broadcast, careless who gleans it: minds like Viva's catch it up as it falls, and wear it gracefully, as a beautiful woman her diamonds, making more brilliant still what was brilliant already.

She was moreover of a temper like that of many who attain to an eminence not theirs from birth; she had only contempt for the class from which she had come, but she had none the less contempt for the class of which a victorious chance had made her one. And, although her mature reason rejected in ridicule the folly of her childish credulity, still something of the beliefs instilled into her in her infancy as to her fairy origin, lingered with her; and when she allowed herself to deal in a touch of Beaumarchais-like epigram on those who "had taken the trouble to be born," it was half with the latent conviction that she had never been born of mortals at all!

She was at no time more seductive than in one of these moods of fantastic rebellion and satire; and her companion allowed himself to be beguiled. If in her absence, analyzing her words, he often wondered wherein the seduction of them had lain, none the less when he entered her presence would their charm become irresistible to him again.

As their converse at length ceased, he bade her seat herself where he pointed, to note the effect of light on the heads of a Liberi opposite.

She obeyed; and as her eyes went to the Liberi they rested also on the picture hanging next it,—the portrait of the boy with the dead water-fowl. She saw that they were now on the same spot where once the old custodian of the galleries had told her the story of that painting.

"You regretted him so much in your childhood—did you not?" she said softly, forgetful for the moment that she ought not, in wisdom, to show any prior knowledge of these galleries; and that the narrative was one never heard in the world of her own present station.

Estmere started.

"Regretted whom?" he asked.

She colored with annoyance at her own unconsidered

impulse and unthinking folly, but it was now too late to recede.

"Your young brother—that boy there with the water-bird in his hand," she made answer. "I heard his story once: long, very long, ago."

"His story! Who could tell it you?"

"An old servant of yours; when I was a mere child. But the tale and the portrait impressed themselves on me; as such things will upon children's malleable minds."

"I never knew that your presence ever before now honored Villiers?"

"Oh—it was but for a few hours. I was brought to see the château: you must have been absent, of course. I was quite a child; but that picture's story stamped itself on my memory."

"I wonder you heard it. I had hoped my servants had known my wishes too well for them to have gossiped of my family histories."

"It was an old white-haired man who narrated it. I dare say because I pressed eager unscrupulous questions upon him—it is so long since then; I have forgotten."

"I can divine whom you mean. He is dead. Blame is useless."

"Yet you are angered?"

"Well—it is always cause for annoyance to find that those who held a trust could not keep it; and I am, perhaps, inclined to be as severe on those who speak blabbing words as on those who speak false ones."

The color left her cheek a little where she leaned it on her hand, as she sat in the Louis Quinze chair that he had wheeled for her use.

"But the history is a noble one for any to tell or to hear?" she said at length.

"It is so indeed; of a most noble madness. But can you not well conceive that the pain of having inherited my lands and title at the cost of my brother's death—a death self-sought—has never wholly passed away from me, has never wholly ceased to taint them with a certain sense of wrong and usurpation?"

"Yes. I can comprehend that."

Her eyes answered him better than her words: he had

the power which only one other possessed, of awakening thoughtfulness, emotion, and sympathy, in this careless and vivacious nature.

"And there was yet more than this," pursued Estmere, the ice of reserve unbroken for so many years melting at her touch. "There was the sense of my father's brutal injustice, his inordinate favoritism to myself, his most culpable cruelty to his first wife, and to her son, all of which drove the boy to his abandonment of his just heritage. It was a great crime—a crime that in my sight still stains my race. If the boy had given any ground for the hate borne to him, it might have been more pardonable; but he gave none. He was of exceeding comeliness and grace, as you see there; full of high courage, of high genius, of high promise; such an heir as the proudest and most fastidious might have regarded with pride and pleasure. He was almost perpetually neglected; when remembered, remembered only to be taunted, goaded, driven wild with bitter ironies cast at his dead mother. I was many years younger than he; but I can still recall the scenes that I witnessed in infancy, and the terror I felt at seeing my father's fury fall on the head of my beloved companion; for I loved him well indeed. To me he was always gentle, generous, most infinitely patient, as youths of his age are very rarely with children. My early life was literally made desolate by his loss——"

He paused, and shaded his eyes with his hand as he gazed at the portrait.

"I grieve that I awakened a memory so painful," she murmured. "Is it certain that he perished?"

"As certain as any death can be where the body cannot be found for burial. There was no doubt left, indeed. The words he murmured over my bed, and which I, half asleep, thought the words of a dream, proved what his intention had been. It would never be possible to recover anything from the ring of water around Beaumanoir. It has deep clefts and bottomless holes, and sweeps out away to the western seas. Moreover, an old woman-servant bore witness to having seen him by twilight plunge in; but she missed him from sight, and thought

nothing of it, as he was accustomed to swim, and dive, and almost live in the waters, like any bittern or gull. Immediate search was made in every direction for him; inquiries were everywhere instituted; but it was considered as conclusively proved that he must have been drowned in the moat. A mausoleum, inscribed to that effect, was erected by my father. His remorse, though utterly unavailing, was sincere. Remembering what I do of Chanrellon's nature, I can well imagine how insult and false accusation hurled him headlong to that insane self-sacrifice."

"He was accused of taking jewels, was he not?"

"Yes! such a senseless, coarse, frantic suspicion!—as if a boy who came of our race, and of his mother's bold, sea-born, free people, could have turned thief!"

"Were the diamonds ever found?"

"Never. Their loss was heavy, for they had historical as well as an enormous pecuniary value."

"Did you ever suspect any one?"

He gave a quick, broken sigh.

"In later years I have thought that the criminal was most likely a Greek youth in the household; a penniless Athenian, pampered by my father's caprices; a scorpion who stung the hands that fed and befouled the hearth that warmed him! But I might be in error—it was but conjecture."

He spoke with effort. She was silent, knowing how deeply and in how cruel a wound this scorpion had thrust its sting.

"Your son bears that title of Chanrellon now?" she asked, seeking refuge in a commonplace.

"It is the second title of the house."

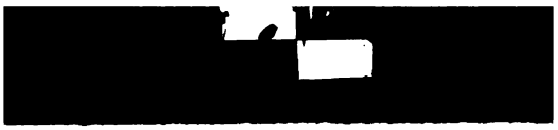
"Does he resemble your brother in the least? There is no portrait of him here?"

"None. There are some at Beaumanoir. He has a womanish beauty."

"I have heard that he is not all that you desire; is it true?"

"He is nothing that I desire! But—we live almost as strangers."

"That seems terrible?"



"It is terrible. It is terrible to me that his mother's son should bear my name."

His voice had passion and emotion in it; and his head was turned from her as he spoke. She was the only living creature to whom he had ever spoken of his dishonored wife. She—the woman whom he loved.

"And there ever lived one who could forsake *you!*" she thought, as for one moment she beheld all the secret torture which his pride and his dignity had so long kept veiled from the gaze of any human eyes. Ere she could answer him, others approached them from the western end of the gallery. He took his hand from the back of her chair and moved slightly away.

"I am not sure, madam, now, that I have placed you right for the St. Catherine," he said, with his habitual tone. "Liberi is a favorite with me; there is so exquisite a softness about his female heads."

They were no more alone that day, and he sought no other opportunity to be in solitude with her; but the words that had been uttered had formed a link between them. She felt nearer to him than she had ever done. She felt that he had said to her what he would have uttered to no other.

A few days later, a young man, in his favorite summer-villa, among the Austrian woods of a fashionable mountain-side resort, whither he had brought all the levities, the extravagancies, the vices, and the *ennui* of his life, received a coarse, ill-spelt missive, of a few lines only. It looked the clumsy scrawl of a cowherd, or a charcoal-burner; yet he read it with an attention which he did not concede to many elegant, perfumed, neglected letters that came with it; for the writer had been a panderer to his worst sins; a she-wolf, who would bring him any lamb within her range; a brute, who served his crimes faithfully for sheer greed of gold; and she wrote in the patois of her province:

"My Lord,—If you have not forgot that fair fool that escaped you here years ago,—that thing they called Viva, —come hither, and let me have speech with you. There is up at the house a grand aristocrat, who they say will

wed with the Earl, your father; and if ever that bastard whom you fancied lived, she lives still of a surety in this duchess. She carries herself like an empress; and it seems a mad freak for me to be bold to write this of her; but I found her out by a look in the eyes, and I dare swear I am not mistaken.

"I am at my lord's service ever,

"ANNETTE VEUILLOT.

"Writ at this dairy of Villiers, on the 10th day of June."

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE afternoon sun was hot and cloudless over all the country by the Loire. The barges and the rafts dropped lazily down the stream, with loads of fruit, of vegetables, or of fresh-mown hay. The women were washing their linen in places where the rocky shore made a shallow creek, or the grass grew lush and long, sloping to the water's edge. The laborers were at work among the vines, whose blossoms were just set, and changing into grape-buds. The horses of the towing-boats plodded lazily on in the warmth, while the drowsy hum of insects filled the air.

There was nothing changed in the out-door life, since the time that a child of fifteen years had sat dreaming among the swallow-swarming ivy, and weaving fancies of an unknown world, while she watched the old boatman mend his striped tanned sail.

The boatman was dead, and the sail, by his will, had enwrapped him as his shroud, where he lay, under the orchids and the vervain that blossomed over his grave: but the song of the birds, and the laugh of the raftsmen, and the noise of the water-wheel, and the voices of the washing-women, bubbled on unaltered, through the length of the dreamy, sultry, fragrant, summer day.

Above one curve of the river, where the old dead boatman had used to sit and mend the rents of his sail in the

shade, a thrush was singing its little heart out upon a plume of pear-tree blossom. The house-door stood wide open, with the sun streaming in over the bare, clean, wooden floor. A cluster of pigeons was balanced on the edge of a brown earthen dish, eating its grain undisturbed. A great knot of white lilies, and moss roses, thrust in a broad pan of water, filled the house with perfume; all was still, and bright, and warm, and full of peace: and above in a little chamber an old woman was dying, the death that to age is release.

She had been born here, in these vine countries, when the tocsin was the only chime that the church-bell rang, and when the waters of the Loire were choked with the corpses they floated to the sea. She had lived here through childhood, and girlhood, and womanhood; working hardly, in field and vineyard, through the changes of the season; bronzed in the torrid noons, and bitten with the winter blasts; bearing burdens with the patience of the mule, and brightening beneath the slightest touch of mirth, like crocuses beneath the first spring sun. She had been wedded here, and here borne her three sons; and here been widowed, and of her sons bereaved; and here beheld her eldest-born's sole child die, in a weakly infancy, of the hard food that alone stood betwixt her and her starvation.

And here, also, the long, heroic, patient, unrewarded life was ended: a mystery of pain, and conflict, and courage, and endless labor, and ceaseless effort, all passed away in silence, and unrecognized of men.

She lay dying in the little darkened chamber, while the bird sang among the fruit-trees.

Each morning, in the luscious summer-time, she had made her slow way out into the porch, and sitting there had gazed with dim eyes out into the sunshine, with the expectant look of one who waits and watches ever on her face. Each day in the still cool spring-time, when the pink buds of the chestnuts were thrusting through the bark, and the violets made purple every waste space of ground, she had sat by her open casement, looking up the reach of the river, with the unrest of a baffled hope told in the nervous movement of her withered hands. Each

night, when night fell at length, she had suffered herself to be led away, looking with a piteous appeal in the face of her handmaiden, as she muttered, "To-morrow?" And the little girl, ill knowing what she meant, but desiring to give comfort, had always smiled, and murmured back, "To-morrow! oh yes—to-morrow."

But the morrow had never come; and the few river-people and vine-laborers who alone knew her had said among themselves that it could never come:—would Paris give back its prey?

Grand'mère sought the sight of one whom Paris had devoured; what avail was that?

The little silvery cadence of the bell that rang before the coming of the host had sounded over the threshold, and across the breadth of the stream, until the bargemen and the rowers on the river heard the faint musical herald of a passing soul, and crossed themselves, and murmured an Ave in the hushed hot day.

The golden rod had touched with its anointed oil the breast, and brow, and feet, of the old dying woman. The blessed bread and wine had been placed to the withered lips which the religion that they symbolized had never fed during the famished hours of many bitter winters. The priest had gone once more across the threshold, with the silver bell shedding its soft cadence over the river and the vine-fields.

The ebbing and exhausted life was left in solitude once more, with no other watcher than the little peasant maiden, weeping sorely because she had no answer with which to respond to the one prayer, sounding ceaselessly upon the silence:

"Will she not come?—before I die?"

With blind wide-open eyes, that had a mute and terrible appeal within them, grand'mère, seeing no more the light through the open lattice, hearing no more the song of the thrush in the pear-blossom, but with one memory only living, still muttered this ever and ever where she lay:

"Will she not come?—before I die?"

For, through the paralysis of death, the longing of the heart still lived.

Through all the length of the years she had been

patient, with the infinite hopeless patience of old age, that sinks ever deeper and deeper into the frozen desolation of its winter, and for which no spring can ever dawn, to change and beam on the eternal cold.

But now,—dying,—the long silent, uncomplaining agony broke out in one great desire, that was all the wandering senses knew: lying there, blind and confused, and stricken motionless, and chilled with the bitter frost of death, she yet retained memory for this.

Would her eyes never behold, nor her ears hear, the only life that she loved?—would she die thus, as she had been left to live, alone?

CHAPTER LIX.

At the Château of Villiers, among the summer luxuriance of blossom, the snow-white statues glistened; on the rapid waters, gayly-painted boats floated under vine-hung branches; down the terraces music and laughter sounded; in the orange-aisles and the rose-gardens men and women passed their idle hours in gayety and indolence, and airy languid loves that beguiled the fancy and never roused the passions.

Among them Viva sat, playing listlessly with a gorgeous Indian bird, and casting careless words among her court, to be treasured as though they were pearls of precious wisdom.

A great fountain sent up its column of radiance near her; a mass of dates and palms screened her from the sun; the half-score of lovers round her heard her, when she chose to speak, with the charmed deference which, often denied to the sayings of sages, is ever awarded to the fair follies of a beautiful woman.

She was supreme—she was absolute sovereign here; every rival paled before her; the envy of one sex and the passion of another gave her endless assurance of her supremacy. Life was perfect to her: pleasures, glories,

vanities, luxuries, votaries, all were accumulated in her path; and the new spell of a love, which she had long only laughed at, was thrown around her at last, giving fresh allurement and fresh fascination to the exercise of that sorcery which otherwise had threatened soon to pall and to satiate out of its too great facility, its too easily-acquired dominion.

Life was perfect in her hands; a scepter that the "gay liar youth" made her credit would never be broken, never cease to have power to summon all charms from all ends of the earth to her usage and service.

Pain—calamity—poverty—age; these existed, she knew, when she paused to think of them. But they were only words; words to her soundless and bodiless. With her they had naught else to do. Certain sums, set aside from her wealth, her stewards disposed of in charity; so much done for the sake of her conscience, all else was dismissed from her mind:—she laughed here in the midst of her roses.

Down the river, which beneath the slopes of Villiers flashed in its broad silver band, a little boat glided; with it there came the ringing of a gentle bell, and in the stern knelt a white-robed chorister, bearing a glittering star aloft.

It was the Host, being borne backward reverently to the distant township whence it came.

"How prettily the bell sounds!" she said, forgetful, or careless, of the fact that the little procession must have traveled to, and from, some dying-bed.

The boat passed out of sight; the tinkle of the bell passed off the air; the laughter and the languid wit resumed their reign around her.

Awhile later, a sealed paper was brought to her; a faint flush of annoyance went over her face as she saw the superscription. Her host alone noted it, and wondered what the cause could be. In that dazzling, unworn life, secure upon the heights of riches and of rank, there could be no mystery, no canker?

Some time afterward, she took an opportunity to pass into the house unobserved. There she opened the letter *It* said, briefly:

"Grand'mère will not live till evening; she must see you to die in peace. I wait for you at the old ferry."

As she read, all the ice of pride, and coldness, and egotism melted from her heart. She gave a piteous cry as though death struck herself. All base and selfish thought died out from her; she only remembered the old creature she had loved through the years of her childhood, and whom she had left to live and to perish in solitude.

"Grand'mère!"—with the tender homely word there came, in a rush of countless memories, a thousand ties of infancy and girlhood—ties broken by her with the gay scorn of a liberated youth,—ties ruptured, but aching forever, in the solitary heart of a forsaken age.

In that moment a tumult of remorse awoke in her; transient it might be, but violent in its truth and in its horror, with all the heat and force of her native impulses. She forgot self, pride, the peril of exposure, the difficulty of compliance; she forgot all except the debt whose payment had so long been driven off and might now be offered but too late. She forgot her station, her dominion, her distance from the peasant who was dying yonder, her cold contempt for all creatures less fair and fortune-favored than herself. She only remembered the days, so long gone by, which the brown, withered, noble face of the old Loirais had been the first on which her eyes unclosed at dawn, and the last that bent over her as she sank to sleep.

"Grand'mère!"—the time had been when lisping out the word she had clung round the neck of the only creature who had ever filled to her in any sense a mother's place, and had loved her with all a child's careless, capricious, fond, unthinking love.

The place was three leagues off; the old ferry, long unused, was one; the way was long, the sun was burning; she dared not order horse, or carriage, or attendant, lest it should be learned whither and with whom she went. Trusting to chance for the avoidance of all notice, and acting only on the spur of inconsidered impulse, she threw a long cloak over her dress, concealed her face in a thick veil, and assured herself that none of her fore-

women were in sight. Then she passed swiftly down an outer staircase which led from one of her balconies into an unfrequented portion of the grounds, and went on through the sunlit park in all the tremulous haste of one whom remorse drives and fear of detection wings.

Once, all the haughty blood in her flamed in hot revolt at this secrecy, which seemed so kin to shame. Once she was tempted to turn back and order out an equipage, and let all the world know where she went. Her errand was a righteous one; why hide it as a shame?

But the nobler impulse was beaten back by the dread lest any of her world should know that story of her past. She felt that she would rather die a thousand deaths than that those who held her now in such high honor should ever learn that she had once been found under those river-woods—a nameless foundling child.

The summons had fallen like a thunderbolt upon her, smiting her conscience from its sleep. But though she obeyed it, through all that still survived in her of the purer faiths of her earlier days, she still recoiled with loathing from the mere thought that those who knew her as she was should ever dream that she was not of their order,—should ever dream the time had been when she had owed bread to a bohemian's alms. Rather than that the truth should ever dawn upon the world where now she reigned, she took the stain of secrecy upon her, and fled on through the sunny glades, not as one who went to do a deed of mercy, but as a criminal who dreaded lest the passing of her footsteps should be tracked and followed.

Once she thought of Estmere; the soilless greatness, the integral truthfulness, of his life seemed for the moment to rebuke this falseness of base pride that screened a just act like a treacherous crime. But, with that thought, rose also the memory of his absolute and unbending pride, the pride of an Order, the pride of the Roman Optimate; and this sufficed to drive back once more the wavering impulse in her.

The large startled eyes of the grazing deer seemed to her like the eyes of the world fastened on her; the sight of a distant charcoal-burner passing down a far-off avenue

made her dread recognition and pursuit. But the tract of the park through which she passed was wild and unfrequented; and the way through the vineyards and woods to the river, the instinct of early impressions made plain to her.

The winding paths down the terraced slopes, the scarce-seen roadway through vine-fields that seemed endless, the old broken hut, brown and roofless, and climbed all over with green flowering weeds, that marked the spot where a ferry, long shifted higher up the waters, once had stood, —all these things, utterly forgotten for many years, became familiar to her with that pang of remembrance, vivid almost to horror, with which the haunts of childhood startle the mind from which they have faded until they are revisited.

Against the ruined boat-house was a sailing-boat; in it a man stood erect with an oar in his hand thrust against the long grasses and reeds of the bank.

The landscape swam in mist before her sight; just thus had she seen him so many times in other years, when the hour of his coming was the golden hour in her summer, and she could have dreamt of no joy on earth or water so great as to sail with him down the long, calm, luminous reach of the river.

How near, and yet how far, that time looked to her! It seemed to kill in her all her own identity.

Which was in truth she?—that Loirais child who had basked in the sunlight, bathing her laughing face and her bright tresses in the stream; or the proud, courted, unrivaled woman, received in all the palaces of Europe?

Seeing her, he sprang on shore, and threw a rough plank betwixt the bank and boat, and held his hands out to her to aid her.

"You are come; that is well," he said, gravely, with no token of surprise, with the air of one whose command, being given, was of necessity obeyed. She, even in that moment, noticed it; and dreamily wondered whence this man, who was in social status but a wanderer, a vagabond, had gained that calm and kingly authority to which even she unresistingly succumbed.

She sank down at the bottom of the boat, worn out

with the heat, the haste, the toil in the sultry day to which she was so little used.

"I am in time?" she asked him breathlessly. He spread a loose sail on a spar so that it sheltered her wholly from the sun, and from the sight of any passing on the shore or in river craft.

"I cannot tell," he answered her gently; "I trust so."

She said nothing. The old influence that he had used to possess stole over her again; she felt heart-sick, ashamed, covered with remorse. She, with all her territory, her treasures, her influence, felt humiliated and stricken with contrition in the presence of the man to whom she owed a debt that she had never paid, and that she never could pay.

He was silent also, setting the little sail to catch the faint flutter of the soft south wind, and steering down the golden gleaming brilliance of the river, running with the tide. The shore glided slowly past them; the brown sail caught colors of glory from the sun; the sweet odors of new-cut hay filled the air from grass-laden barges; the women, sitting in the rock-hewn grape-hung cabins of the banks, looked up as they drifted by, and laughed, and called across the great breadth of the stream, "Ah-ha, is it thee, Tricotrin?"

But he for once never answered where he sat at the helm. He sailed his race with death, and with every beat of the tide there went a beat of a human heart that would soon be still forever.

And thus she went back to the home of the swallows.

CHAPTER LX.

EVER and anon the old, dark, eager, noble face was lifted from its pillow, and the withered lips murmured three words:

"Is she come?

For Tricotrin had bent over her bed, and had murmured, "I go to seek her, she is near;" and grand'mère had believed and been comforted, for she knew that no lie passed his lips. And she was very still; and only the nervous working of the hard, brown, aged hand showed the longing of her soul.

Life was going out rapidly, as the flame sinks fast in a lamp whose oil is spent. The strong and vigorous frame, the keen and cheery will, had warded off death so long and bravely; and now they bent under, all suddenly, as those hardy trees will bend after a century of wind and storm,—bend but once, and only to break forever.

The red sun in the west was in its evening glory; and through the open lattice there were seen in the deep blue of the sky, the bough of a snow-blossomed pear-tree, the network of the ivy, and the bees humming among the jasmine flowers. From the distance there came faintly the musical cries of the boatmen down the river, the voices of the vine-tenders in the fields, the singing of a throstle on a wild grape-tendril.

Only, in the little darkened chamber the old peasant lay quite still,—listening, through all the sweet and busy sounds of summer, for a step that never came.

And little by little all those sounds grew fainter on her ear: the dullness of death was stealing over all her senses; and all she heard was the song of the thrush where the bird swayed on the vine, half in, half out, of the lattice.

But the lips moved still, though no voice came, with the same words: "Is she come?" and when the lips no

more could move, the dark and straining wistfulness of the eyes asked the question but more earnestly, more terribly, more ceaselessly.

The thrush sang on, and on, and on;—but to the prayer of the dying eyes no answer came.

The red sun sank into the purple mists of cloud; the song of the bird was ended; the voice of the watching girl murmured—"They will come too late!"

For, as the sun faded off from the vine in the lattice, and the singing of the bird grew silent, grand'mère raised herself with her arms outstretched, and the strength of her youth returned in the hour of dissolution.

"They never come back!" she cried. "They never come back!—nor will she! One dead in Africa,—and one crushed beneath the stone,—and one shot on the barricade. The three went forth together; but not one returned. We breed them, we nurse them, we foster them;—and the world slays them body and soul, and eats the limbs that lay in our bosoms, and burns up the souls that we knew so pure. And she went where they went:—she is dead like them."

Her head fell back; her mouth was gray and parched, her eyes had no longer sight; a shiver ran through the hardy frame that winter storms and summer droughts had bruised and scorched so long; a passionless and immeasurable grief came on the brown, weary, age-worn face.

"All dead!" she murmured in the stillness of the chamber, where the song of the bird had ceased, and the darkness of night had come.

Then through her lips the last breath quivered in a deep-drawn sigh, and the brave, patient, unrewarded life passed out forever.

A moment later, swift uneven steps sprang up the narrow stairway, and into the gloom of the little room came the glory of a woman's loveliness.

"Grand'mère! grand'mère!" she cried, as she threw herself on her knees against the couch.

The cry, for which the dying senses had been so long strained in yearning and vain desire, fell unheard on the ear which could no more be vexed with the toiling sounds

of the travailing world. Calm, responseless, unutterably sad, the dead face looked upward in mute reproach.

The prayer of nine long years was answered at the last,——and the answer came too late.

"Grand'mère! grand'mère!" she cried. "I am come! I am here! Oh, look at me once!—only once!"

But the eyes had no light, the lips had no reply. What avail was remorse?—its anguish could not reach the soul that had passed away from all earthly pain and from all mortal love.

She came too late.

CHAPTER LXI.

"AH! How I loathe myself!"

She spoke in agony, with the tears falling fast from her eyes, and her heart aching in vain self-reproach, where she stood in the quaint, dark kitchen-chamber that she had known so well of old. All her warmer, richer, sweeter, holier nature had awakened, and quivered under the branding iron of remorse. She looked to herself so base, so cruel, so worthless of every thought of tenderness that had been given her by the dead.

The unuttered rebuke of that colorless face, so livid, so old, so still with its own sublime peace, had pierced through all the vanities and pride and egotism of her life down to the heart of her youth, which still beat there beneath them.

Every trifle in the little room around her, every homely and familiar cottage thing of use, came back on her memory with a pang.

The place was so utterly unchanged: the burnished coppers, the clean brass utensils, the strings of drying herbs and melons, the black pot simmering over the wood embers on the hearth, the white cat sleeping in the window, the oil-lamp burning on the low oak settle, all the common things of daily life that she had known so well,

were all there unaltered since the days when in her infancy her feet had danced upon the wooden chairs in glee because the hot milk foamed ready for her morning pottage.

Not one of them was changed; but she!——she burst into passionate tears as she thought of the little, gay, nameless child that once had lived and laughed amid these lonely things, and of the face, now set in death, whose brown worn features had softened to such tender grace in the light of the summer morning and at the mirth of the infant's play.

Countless memories thronged on her;—of childish pains and angers, of feverish hours of illness, of petulant outbursts of willful wrath, of April storms of passing griefs over a dead bird or a stray kitten, and, through all these, of the patient, gentle, cheerful endurance of a love that never complained and never wearied. For such a debt what payment had been great enough?—and all that she had given had been silence, neglect, oblivion,—the triple coin wherewith Love oftenest is paid.

He let her passion spend itself silently.

It was a caustic that might, perchance, burn out the cankers of the world within her soul. With her he had no bond in that instant. All his sympathy, all his pity, all his reverence, were with that aged, lonely, dauntless life that had been left to ebb out in solitude; the life lived only to see all that it cherished perish.

The first words he spoke were brief, as he raised the drooping wick of the lamp.

"Madam—it were best you went homeward. Your host and your Order must not know that you weep for a peasant!"

"Ah, hush! I merit the lash of your sarcasm and of your scorn, God knows, yet—spare me them now. I cannot bear them!"

He placed the lamp back on its settle.

"I but remind you,—would you have it known that you are here?"

She started with a throb of terror.

"No—no! Surely there may be means,—but,—I have thought of myself, alone, so long, so selfishly, so remorse-

lessly. I can only think of *her* now! I have been so cruel, so heartless. If I could only have heard her speak to me, and only have begged once for her forgiveness!"

He smiled, very wearily, and made no answer. He knew that to himself she repeated, and would continue to repeat, the ingratitude and the neglect that, given to the dead, now caused such futile and vehement remorse. But of this his own lips never reminded her.

He stood silent, with the dusky lamplight behind him so that he could see her face, while his own was screened from her, watching her with a strange pain; wondering vaguely and incredulously if this exquisite and imperial woman, who moved slowly to and fro the narrow room, could be in truth but the developed life of the young child whose dancing naked feet had moved in such gay measure to the old peasant's crooning country-songs.

He had suffered much, and often, since the last day when she had passed out from under the low brown porch to go to the "great world" for which she pined; but he had never suffered as he did now, beholding her, for the first time, under that roof where her infancy had been sheltered by him.

Once she paused in her restless passage up and down the chamber, and turned her lustrous eyes full on him.

"Ah! Tell me the truth!—you think me base beyond redemption?"

"No," he answered her, where he stood in the deep shadow. "I think you—very human."

"To be human, then, is to be lower than the dogs that love what feeds them?"

"Perhaps! The dogs will love the hands that beat them. There is none of that love among such fair things as you."

Her head sank, with the hot blood burning in her face.

"Why did you not keep me here?" she said, with impetuous emotion. "Why did you not tell me what I should become? I should have been poor, nameless, unknown; but—I should have been innocent at least, I should have done the duty that I owed, I should have helped her in her age, and soothed her in her death-agonies!"

A breath that was almost a sob caught the words as she spoke them: she little heeded the blow which each dealt to the heart of their hearer.

The answer which sprang, hot, eloquent, upbraiding, bitter and tender at once to his lips, he restrained; he answered her briefly, gently,—

"I did not keep you against your will, because,—you would *not* have remained innocent, you would have refused to accept duty, you would have broken into perilous revolt, in such a life as the life you alone could have led here. The greatness you have gained would not now have sown evil in your nature, had none of the seeds of evil been latent there; such evil is sinless to the world's creed, in a patrician woman; it would have been evil accursed, and shameful, and wretched, in a woman nameless, and penniless, and motherless, and consumed with the corrosion of discontent. I knew you better than you knew yourself. If the Duchess de Lirà be heartless, merciless, conscienceless, what would the actress, the adventuress, have been? Once I bade you repay me what you deemed you owed, by keeping ever in you the higher things of your love, and truth, and courage. I was unwise enough to dream that my one desire would be obeyed, against all the commands of your passions, your prides, and your vanities. Once also you prayed that death might come to you if ever you forgot me: the grass would have grown through many seasons above your grave if that prayer had been granted!"

A cry of intolerable suffering broke from her.

"Say all you will!" she cried. "Your hardest words cannot scourge me so sharply as my own conscience does. I have forgotten!—more brutally, more shamelessly than the very cattle ever forget a master that has fed and tended them. And, yet, I have remembered too,—remembered more than you can ever dream. At times my thoughts of you have been an agony. At times my childhood has come back to me with such reproach that I could have found strength to kill myself. At times—in all the intoxication of the world—the sound of your voice has seemed to steal on my ear, the gaze of your eyes has seemed to haunt me as I went, till I longed for

the peace of your presence with a lost child's longing for its home! This is the truth; though how shall you believe me in witness of all the false shame, the mad vanity, the infamous ingratitude of my life? You say that I should have been far worse than I am, had I remained with you; can anything be worse than such selfishness and such oblivion as mine? Besides,—you are so great, so true, of a simplicity so noble, of a justice so divine, your influence would have been too strong on me for me to have sunk to evil: you could have made of me what you would, had I but stayed by you!"

And in the remorse of the hour it did indeed seem thus to her; and in that hour she beheld, as by a vision, all that her life would have been, if never fevered by thirst for gold and rank, if never touched by the fast-lengthening shadows of falsehood, if never drawn into that furnace of ambition where all impulses and instincts are fused into one passion; if lived in peace and in contentment, purified, and strengthened, and raised high by the loftiness of truth and of self-sacrifice, beneath his love and law.

In that one hour she saw that she had forsaken the gold for the dross, the rock for the reeds, the greater for the lesser, as men do oftentimes, and women yet more surely in their headlong and blind choice.

He heard; and a great shudder shook him.

He had condemned himself to endless and unrequited martyrdom, that she might pass to the fate she desired, and never have aught wherewith to reproach him; and even out of this she wove a lash that scourged him with deeper stripes than any he had borne!

"Wait, wait! or you will kill me!" he cried. "'Stayed by me!' Oh, God! if you had done so! But your heart was disloyal, and lost to me; could I hold captive your body? You see now a worth you have missed, in that life that you would have led by my side; but then,—who could make you believe? And you forget—you forget—a creature of your sex and your loveliness could not have abode with me without a chain that you would not have taken, unless gold had gilded the fetters: you must have been my mistress, or my wife!"

She started violently; and the blood crimsoned all her face; she had spoken in the impulse of the old love and reverence she had yielded him in her girlhood; she had never dreamed of any other life with him than that of the by-gone familiar communion which they had known in this lowly place when she had been a child, and he had been all the world to her.

In this hour her pride had been dead, her rank forgotten, her self-love abhorred; in this hour conscience, and memory, and the veneration she had borne him, had alone reigned with her.

Now, his indulgence of that moment's hot and unchecked utterance, recalled to her the many times that she had wept in his arms, clung to his embrace, been kissed by his lips, in that long-perished time; in this moment it seemed to her that the tie between them was nearer, stronger, more indissoluble, than the ties betwixt father and daughter, wife and husband, master and slave!

Even while these memories burned her with an abhorred sense of debt and shame, the height and depth, the might and beauty, of this life-long love that she had flung away, smote her with its greatness and its divinity as it had never done in earlier years, never done through all the self-absorption of her life. It appalled, it amazed, it affrighted her:—such a debt as this could never be paid; and, while it remained unpaid, how could any woman owing it be free?

He, divining all her thoughts, with that knowledge of her mutable nature which he had so long possessed, hastened to cover from her sight that passion which for one instant had been near its betrayal to her. She was his debtor; naught could cancel such a debt; therefore he forced himself to calmness, and hastened to repair what might have seemed a claim laid through that debt.

"You are of the world; you know its tenets now," he said, tranquilly. "You know, therefore, how idle it is to dream you could have remained with me without reproach. Unless, indeed, your whole life had been mine. But—you remember?—I asked you once if my love would suffice to you; and your answer was, that you craved

greatness also. I had not greatness; how could I content you?"

"Yes! When I answered you I was vain, and worthless, and full of avarice, as I am now!"

The words were muttered low in her throat; she moved with feverish unrest to and fro the little chamber; she wondered, with that curious dreamy wonder that comes on us when, having chosen one path, we marvel whither the other would have led, how it would have been with her if she had loved and followed this redeemer of her life. And her heart told her—knowing its own passions and its own weakness—that she, with her thirst for power, and her greed for homage, and her worship of eminence and of magnificence, would have only dwelt with him in the unceasing cruelty of discontent, or have left him, to deal him the fate of Bruno.

And she was very base in her own sight; for she knew likewise that, for this very cause, she had ever been utterly beneath this great life that she had elected to desert for things, compared with it, so mean, and vain, and worthless.

She paused once and looked at him, with all the old look of her childhood back in her uplifted eyes.

"Such men as you," she murmured, "need nobler things than women to love you and to value you! We are beneath you—we know nothing of greatness such as yours!"

He smiled: the smile of such infinite sadness.

"Rather you see it not, unless it wear the purple, and bear the orb, of visible power. But I, indeed claim none; have none; unless it may be such as may grow out of freedom."

"You have the highest—the best—the only greatness!"

And in that moment she saw this truth that she had so long neglected or derided; saw that the liberty, the self-mastery, the simplicity, the courage, and the supreme scorn for the insincerity, the artifice, and the bondage of the world, which were in this man's life, had a greatness that surpassed all other the earth held, though a greatness unrecognized and unrewarded of men.

He answered her nothing.

Though she spoke thus, saw thus, felt thus, he knew well that she would make again the choice she then had made, were the election again offered her:—that now, as then, could the choice be afresh set before her, would she forsake him, and go from him to the pomps of the world.

While she owned the greatness of the truths, the liberties, and the simplicities whereon his life was founded, she would yet shrink from holding out her hands to him in her palace as her friend, from bidding her compeers and her lovers behold all that she owed to him!—and there was unuttered scorn in him, as well as unutterable sadness, as he looked on her in silence.

"It grows late," he said briefly, at length. "I must remind you once more—do you desire your absence discovered?"

She started, and glanced at the clock; with whose hands her own childish ones had so often played in mischievous fancies to retard, or to advance, some dreaded hour of study or some desired moment of playtime.

"It is late indeed! I shall be missed:—he has theatrical pieces to-night on purpose for my pleasure; my absence must not be known. How quickly can I return?"

"In two hours; scarcely sooner. You will do best to lose no time."

"I must go *there*,—once more. Then I will come," she murmured. "Stay! tell me,—there is no fear that peasant child who is with her can suspect,—can recognize me,—can speak to others?"

"No fear. That girl is from Lorraine—a grand-niece of grand'mère. She never heard of you, and she will now return east to her own people, deeming you some great princess who came out of charity to see an old peasant who once nursed you."

She shuddered a little as she heard.

"But—but, I cannot bear to think that this place may pass to strangers—that all these things of hers may be scattered;—that the animals, and the fowls, and the swallows may be ill treated or killed. Can you not purchase it for me without my name appearing, and place some one in it who will be good to all the creatures?"

She stroked the cat as she spoke; it seemed a link betwixt her and the dead.

"The place—such as it is—is mine," he made answer. "You need have no fear; care shall be had of it."

He did not remind her that to rent it, and fill it with its cottage things, and keep it for her with some sort of picturesque grace about it, he had sacrificed much, toiled hardly oftentimes, its slight costs heavily taxing his own means.

She felt what he had not uttered, and moved in silence from the chamber.

More than an hour had passed ere she returned from her last look upon the face that had been first among her earliest memories; her eyelids were swollen, and her lips white, as she came to him.

"I am ready," was all she said.

They did not speak as they left the cottage, and went down through the scarlet beans and the wild-growing gourds to the landing-place in the garden, and drifted away in the boat down the river.

Her eyes watched, as long as they could follow it, the little light burning in the chamber of the dead.

The proudest and most ambitious dreams with which she had last left that innocent home among the swallows had attained their fruition:—but remorse and repentance were with her.

No words passed between them as the boat slowly labored against the stream.

When they reached the place of the ferry, he aided her in silence to land.

"I will follow you," he said simply, "near enough to be at hand if you need me."

"That is how you have ever followed my life!"

"Well! the time may yet come when I may be wanted, wild as the thought seems of such an omnipotent life as yours. Pass onward—unless you would have your host disquieted by your absence."

"Would he care if I were dead in that river!"

The murmur was bitter and doubting. It betrayed the one victory on which she alone was uncertain, the one

desire that alone was ungranted to her, the one doubt of her own power that alone had ever humiliated her.

He gave a short, sharp sigh. It had told him all.

"You still desire his love!"—the words were almost savage in their vehemence.

She was silent. She could have bitten her tongue through, that ever it should have betrayed her thus.

He let her pass on; and she went swiftly, with passionate movement, through the darkness of the forest-lands.

When the lights which illumined the terraces glistened in view, he gained her side with a few rapid steps.

"You are in safety; yonder is your entrance. The heart of your childhood has awakened in you to-night; keep it waking, or its next sleep will be death. And—if, in your cruel caprices, you set your soul on the man who lives yonder,—remember that a lie is accurst in his sight, and that he has once suffered betrayal. I forbid you to play with his peace, or to trifle with his honor."

"*You* forbid me!"—even in that moment, as she faced him in the moonlight, the chief emotion in her was her arrogant pride, that defied all dictation and authority.

"Yes—I."

His eyes met hers with a look in them that compelled and awed her, as a master's look his dog—a look which made her subject to him.

Without another word he turned away. She went onward, confused, breathless, vaguely afraid, filled with tumultuous emotions.

The lesser terror of her own discovery died away in her. It was eclipsed by a greater—the terror lest that vast granite mass of reckless and merciless ingratitude that she had piled higher and higher with every year of her life, till it had shut out the holy light of heaven, should one day fall and crush her.

She gained the terrace with swift trembling steps, passed through the entrance-door unobserved, and glided up the staircase leading to her apartments, without detection. This portion of the building was forsaken; but through its casements on the farther side, which looked away to the great south court adjoining the stables

she saw the forms of men and horses moving to and fro by torchlight. She divined the truth, that they had missed and were about to search for her.

There were none of her own attendants in her chambers; she was thankful for an absence that best befriended her. She went first to her mirrors to see how her face betrayed her; all her color was gone, and her eyelids were swollen with tears; but she was one of the few women in whom emotion increases, because it chastens and softens, beauty. She bathed her face in water; coiled up her hair which had fallen; dropped down on to a couch in all her accustomed grace and indolence of repose, and rang for her women, who, entering hurriedly, could ill conceal their amaze at sight of her, and recounted breathlessly that her host, on missing her from the drawing-rooms, had found that no one had seen her for several hours, had then become alarmed as night had fallen, and was at that moment about to start in quest of her with his horsemen.

She sent him a message of graceful thanks; adding that she had wandered somewhat too far in the forest, and been belated. That was all.

Then, with haste yet especial care, she arrayed herself in her uttermost brilliancy,—in a misty cloud of black and silver, with sapphires gleaming here and there, and a knot of passion-flowers in her bosom. The slight exhaustion and loss of bloom from her loveliness only added to its charm; she looked, and was reassured that none could trace any touch of sorrow or of apprehension on her.

"He feared once that I should be an actress like the woman Coriolis. Ah, heaven! what else am I now?" she thought, as she turned from the mirrors.

When she entered the drawing-rooms, none of the many personages then gathered at Villiers looked deeper than the surface of her words, or supposed that there had been any other cause for her absence than this which she alleged—that she had strolled far in the forest, and been benighted. None—save her host, who, as he welcomed her safety, and apologized for his own needless anxieties,

regarded her with a look she could ill meet, and recalled that letter which had come to her in the rose-gardens.

Yet the terror of that past hour, when he had been haunted by the thoughts of countless accidents that might have chanced to her, had told him, in the sharp eloquence of anguish, that his life were valueless without this woman.

Although he studied her keenly, he could see no trace of emotion, no sign of abstraction in her through the hours at the dinner-table, and in the bijou theater, to which, to do her pleasure, he had summoned a choice stage-troop of Paris. She was slightly more languid, and had little of her accustomed wit—that was all.

He could not tell that all she saw, throughout that evening, was a little low bed, in a small dark chamber; and an old, storm-beaten, patient, heroic face, with the stillness and the grandeur of death set on it.

He longed to question her, but the delicacy of his high breeding, and his courtesy as a host, both sealed his lips.

"I grow a madman," he told himself. "Mystery! what mystery could there be in the life of a woman young, proud, eminent as she is? I dream; and because the strongest love of my youth betrayed me, my dreams are only suspicions!"

And suspicion was a foul and a craven thing in his sight—a spy that could have no lodgment in the frank, just, high thoughts of a gentleman.

As he mused thus, he was standing, after the dramatic representations, alone in the embrasure of a picture cabinet, that led out on to the head of the grand staircase. He had drawn the curtain back, and was gazing on to the moonlit terrace and the oak forests below, without thinking of what he beheld. He started as he heard the sweep of a woman's robes near him, and saw the object of his thoughts crossing the little chamber. She paused, with a certain hesitation. She had been ignorant of his presence there; she was leaving the reception-rooms to seek her own apartments. She was worn out with the self-command she had attained, and both fatigue and sadness were visible on her face as she passed through, deeming herself in solitude.

On a sudden impulse, she approached him.

"I have not thanked you, I fear, for your concern for my safety to-night," she said, hurriedly. "I must tell you that the reasons I gave for my absence were only partially true. The fall of evening overtook me, indeed, in your forests, but it was no accident by which I was delayed."

His eyes lightened with surprised pleasure:

"Any confidence you may place in me will be cherished and sacred, you are sure. But,—do not deem yourself called on to give it simply because I enjoy the privilege of being your host."

For the moment, a desire came over her to tell him the whole unwarped and unvarnished truth. But the desire was not strong enough to conquer the false pride within her, and the terror she felt of being lowered and humiliated in his sight.

She hastened with all her most graceful arts of speech to thank him, to assure him that this was but a slight matter:—she did not wish it spoken of, lest she should be wearied with inquiries. She had heard in the latter half of the day that a noble old woman—a peasant who had nursed her in her infancy—was lying in the extremities of death in a cottage by the river-side, and was praying earnestly and piteously to see her once again. She could not refuse such a request; she had gone thither by herself, preferring not to make her errand known. She had been unaware that her absence would be of such duration.

So the delicate polished semi-falsehoods ran, with soft successful fluency. But while she uttered them, she was degraded in her own eyes. She told him no lie, indeed: yet none the less did she deceive him.

Keen of vision though he was, and difficult to content in aught that savored of evasion, or challenged the acuteness of his judgment, he was thrown off his guard by the joy he felt at finding so much pity in the woman whom he had dreaded as an unscrupulous, heartless, and self-absorbed coquette. It seemed nothing strange to him that so sudden memory and compassion had moved her, and sent her forth on an unweighed impulse; for he had seen the sympathy and the agitation with which she had

watched the perils of human life in the stone-yard. And he accepted, unanalyzed and unquestioned, a narrative which at another hour, and from other lips, he would have deemed strange, involved, and insufficient.

"I honor you for your noble charity and for your gentleness of heart," he murmured. "If you have that divine pity in you, why will you stifle it so often, and——"

"Hush, hush!" she interrupted him, passionately. "Do not *you* praise me! 'Noble charity'—mine! If you only knew the selfishness, the cruelty, the baseness of my life! When I have a touch of holier feeling, of higher thought in me, it comes too late, as it came too late to-night!"

"Too late?"

"Yes, she was dead. My words fell on ears forever deaf to the voices of earth. I reproach myself more than I could ever tell you!"

"How was it fault of yours? You knew that this old creature lived on this country side?"

"Yes, I knew; and I had promised so often—through so many years—to go and let her look upon my face once more, and yet I never went. I let summer and winter glide away again, and again, and again; and I never remembered that time brings death to the old. I had leisure for all the pomps, and the pleasures, and the frivolities, and the caprices of my life; but I never had leisure for this one simple duty. And when I reached her side, she was dead!"

The tears gushed into her eyes afresh; her lips quivered. This was real, and sincere, and unstudied. On this she could utter the truth to him.

His thoughts were not with the obscure lost life of which she spoke, but with this exquisite, wayward, changeful, imperious, incomprehensible woman, whose moods varied like the sun and shade of a spring day, and whose tenderness and remorse were as passionate as her vanity and her egotism were cold. Fear and doubt, suspicion and wisdom, all faded away in him as though they had never been; he only remembered that she beguiled him as no temptress had done since the days of his youth

"If you have so much pity for the dead, who cherished

you in your infancy, have you no pity for the living, who worship you in your womanhood?" he said, suddenly; with a sound in his voice that she had never heard, a look on his face that she had never seen, as the white moonlight fell about them where they stood by the opened casement.

"It is the common reproach against me that I have had too little," she murmured, in answer.

"A reproach you deserve only too well! But—but—will you find mercy at last? Passion has no place on my lips. It betrayed me in my youth; it has no fitness in my present years. And yet, you have won my secret from me to-night; you must hear what I thought never to tell; you must know—that I am mad enough to love you!"

He spoke, almost without hope. He spoke to a coquette who had never spared, to a sovereign who had never stooped, to a woman who had never pitied. Yet, as she listened, her face changed with a marvelous light, and flush, and tenderness that no eyes had ever beheld on it. She was silent, but she raised her head, and turned, and looked at him:—one look only, still, by it he was answered.

And as her proud head dropped down upon his breast, and his lips sought hers to find there all the lost joys of his dead youth, he felt her whole frame thrill in his embrace, and heard her broken words:

"I am not worthy of you! I am not worthy!"

CHAPTER LXII.

"IMPERIL his peace—trifle with his honor. Ah, heaven! There will be no need to forbid me that!" she thought, in the solitude of her chamber an hour later, while the touch of his first kisses seemed still to linger on her lips, and the fervor of passion seemed still to gaze on her from the eyes which she had thought would never soften in their regard.

A joy had come to her, beside which all the joys of her victorious years looked faint of hue and poor of treasure. From its long opium-sleep of deep-drugged vanity her soul had stirred at last; and the love which she had so long derided and disdained, had awakened in her for the one who alone, amid throngs of crowding flatterers, had neglected, condemned, and distrusted her.

She loved him—with a vivid force, a reverent humility, an impassioned tenderness, that a year earlier she would have mocked at as lowest weakness, wildest madness. She loved him—with a love that set its heel upon her pride, and bent her strength beneath it. She loved him—and this one missing jewel from her triple diadem of youth, and power, and loveliness, was found and added to her crown.

Love had had cruel usage at her hands. It had watched over her from the hour when her young eyes had opened at the music of the Straduarius, to gaze at the purple butterflies dancing in the sun; it had been lavish of every richest thing to her, and had waited upon her with a slave's submission; its chaplets were wound on her brows, its blossoms strewed her path, its wings had lifted her up to loftiest heights, and its smile had ever shed sunlight upon her. But she, in answer, had only cast to it some gay scorn, some light irony, some child's cruelty, some woman's contempt.

Yet even now it was not weary; it was not driven away; it brought to her the latest and the holiest of all its countless gifts, it nestled in her bosom like a dove that bears glad tidings, it changed even the pangs of remorse into the throbs of joy. Love had been forsaken by her in a thousand careless seasons, yet it remained with her, and was faithful ever.

Even from this death-hour, when the sin of her ingratitude had dealt its deadliest stroke, there had sprung, through Love, the fullest sweetness that her life had known: and a vague fear came on her of this giver so prodigal, of this slave so patient, of this friend so constant and unwearied.

"Oh God!" she murmured in her solitude. "I have been so base, so faithless, so guilty to all love. If his,

the only love I treasure, should take its vengeance and forsake me!"

She had cast one great life away from her as idly as a child casts balls of cowslips on the air, as selfishly as a falconer casts hawks down a south wind, as cruelly as a murderer casts dead limbs upon the sea: was it just that another should become hers also?

Was no retribution near? Its terror seemed to touch her, and daunt her strength, and wither her pride, and freeze her new-born joy with its breath of ice, where she stood in her loneliness, and gazed at that beauty of her face and form which had so late been to her all she heeded upon earth, yet which now would have grown worthless and without radiance in her sight, unless fair in his eyes, and given to his arms.

For the voice of conscience spoke in her, and questioned ceaselessly—

"Will you go to his heart with a shame concealed? Will you lift your lips for his kiss, with a lie hovering on them? Will you answer his faith with your falsehood?"

A day since, an hour since, she had said to herself that he should never know; that though she should heap lie on lie upon her head, the truth should be concealed from him and from the world. An hour ago her pride had been holier to her, her eminence dearer to her than any other thing.

But with the touch of his lips, with the possession of his love, all that was still noble in her nature had sprung to life once more. Now that she knew his peace, and honor, and future all were hers, she knew that she might with less baseness strike a knife into his heart than be his wife with one treachery between them.

She knew that to take his love, leaving him in blindness, was treacherous as any assassin's thrust. She knew that by reason of that very guilt which had deceived him in his youth, to deceive him afresh was the foulest cowardice that ever stained a woman's life. Better, she knew, be forever severed from him, than glide into his life through the channels of falsehood, than live in union with him with one act in her past untold,

than sleep in his bosom with a single secret to haunt the hours of the night. Better to summon all the world about her, and fling her story to the winds, and stand before him, without pride, without power, without any single thing of greatness or of dignity or of possession left, but able to look into his eyes without one fear of what they should there read; able to say to him in honesty and strength—"there is no lie on the lips that you kiss: there is no secret in the life that you make one with your own."

Her heart and her conscience had been startled from their long sleep that night. She was awakened from the deep dreams of that supreme selfishness which had drugged her like an opiate; the courage, the truthfulness, the spirit of her childhood were once more roused.

"What is it I do!" she thought in horror. "Win love, and trust, and honor, on a lie!"

She knew that it was possible,—nay, likely,—that, knowing all, he would put her from his life forever. She knew the pride of birth that was in him; the patrician contempt that shone forth so often in his slightest words; the intense dread of any shadow of dishonor that the early infidelity of his wife had left perpetually on him. She knew that with all the passion he bore her, he loved his honor, and the dignity and purity of his name, far more. She knew that if she told him the bare bitter truth, it was well-nigh a surety that she would never look upon his face again. And this—not alone from the mere impulses of pride, but from the doubt in his soul which would say—"faithless in her childhood, and a falsehood to the world, what warrant have I that she will be truer and more loyal to me?"

And yet all that ever had been nobler in her was aroused and in tumult that night. The dead face of the woman whom she had deserted; the burning rebukes of the man she had abandoned, had withered up the vanities and arrogancies of her life; and beneath them the living heart beat still—beat faster and more loudly because it throbbed in pain.

She gazed at her own loveliness with the old rapt worship [illegible] in her regard.

"I shall give him all this!" she thought, while a hot flush stole over her face. "It is enough!"

But in her conscience she knew that this beauty would be the most cruel, the most fatal gift that ever woman's beauty was to man, unless with it she gave also—truth.

There stole on her the memory of a day,—long, very long, ago,—when one, against whom her past had been an endless sin, had murmured to her in the words of his farewell:—"Let my memory stand between thee and thy temptations, so shall I have no gift to give thee."

And she fell on her knees, and wept in an agony of grief, and prayed in passionate, inarticulate, wild prayer, "Oh, God, make me for one hour worthy of the mighty love that I forsook!"

When she arose, her face had a weary, hopeless, rigid look, as of one who has striven and conquered, indeed, but with such strife and such conquest as leave the victor broken, exhausted, well-nigh slain.

"He shall know all," she muttered through her colorless lips. She turned, and moved through the loneliness of her chambers, and passed out in the deserted corridor.

The great building was silent; she knew that he was alone in his library, since, when they had parted, he had spoken of letters of import that would occupy him until daybreak. She went to seek him that night, that hour, dreading her own weakness of shame and of self-pity, dreading lest her strength should fail, and this martyrdom pass from her.

The two white lines of marble stairs ran parallel with each other, severed by the vastness of the hall below. All the lights still burned and glittered on them. As she stood on the head of one, up the ascent of the other there came a swift, silent step, like the light tread of a greyhound.

She glanced across,—the stranger glanced at her. It was but one instant that their eyes met. He passed onward, with his eyelids lowered, and his swift step unchanged. She stood as though rooted to the ground, her whole frame shivering like that of an antelope which sees the panther afar off.

"Chanrellon! Are you coming?" cried a laughing voice from above.

"I am coming!" answered the stranger, as a young man answers a young comrade.

She turned and crept back into her chamber like a creature numb with cold, and cast herself across her couch, and lay there in a stupor.

What avail to take confidence to him now!

Truth now could look but Fear.

When her women, awhile later, entered her apartments, they found her cold and stupefied, the passion-flowers crushed upon her hair, her bosom cut with the sapphires' sharp facets; and when consciousness revived in her under their terrified efforts, they heard her murmur—

"My sin has come home to me! It is just, it is just!"

CHAPTER LXIII.

MIDWAY between the park and the dairies there was a cluster of acacias, now in blossom, and luxuriant as they only are south of the Loire. They parted two water-threaded meadows, and formed a thicket of foliage and blossom.

Under their boughs stood Annette Veuillot, with one hand on her hip, and the other balancing on her head the milk-pail that served to disguise her errand. Beside her stood the man whose feminine and languid grace had been so fair in her eyes, because of its utter unlikeness to her own coarse, robust, weather-beaten strength and ugliness. Her mouth laughed wide, her tawny skin was flushed with eagerness, her breast heaved against her leathern bodice.

"It was not madness in me, then!" she muttered exultantly. "Why were you so loth to believe?"

"I was not loth!" answered her companion, unable, through the bond between them, to resent her familiarity

"I was incredulous, indeed. The Duchess de Lirà!—I have heard through so many seasons of her beauty, her fame, her extravagance. I could not credit that a creature so proud and powerful could be——"

"That bohemian's brat!" said the woman, with ferocious glee. "But she is, she is, I will wager; whatever millions of lies they may have told to screen her. You saw her well, my lord?"

"Twice. Once,—as long as I chose to look,—from the musicians' gallery, before any knew of my arrival; and again on the staircase. I do not think there is a doubt, though—Heaven!—who could have believed in such a change!"

"Fine feathers make fine birds! I knew her at a glance. Women never forget. Would you have known her, my lord, if I had not put this thing in your thoughts?"

"No; I doubt if I should. I should have been perplexed with some resemblance, but no more. The child was lovely, but the woman is magnificent as a goddess!"

There was a fervid longing in his tone that caught her ear, that told her with what quickness the died-out fancy for the child would revive in passion for the woman.

"Will she wed with your father?" she asked, savagely.

He broke a cluster of blossoms off the acacia with a gesture of impatience.

"He says so. I had speech with him late last night, concerning a question of some property, which he supposes is the object of my visit. I saw a change in him—there is a look in his eyes which is new there. I made allusion to his marriage as a rumor that I had heard. I asked if it were a true one. He answered, very briefly, that it was. No more words passed between us. I let him see that I was surprised and ill pleased, that was all. And to this he was indifferent. Now, you have no proof to give me that this persuasion of yours is a certainty?"

"None," she said, sullenly. "But if you are not answered, name old Virelois to her as I did; you will see then!"

"That is not what I mean. Myself, I have no doubt. But on anything less than some actual doubt, I cannot

say to the Duchess de Lirà, to the betrothed wife of Estmere, 'You are a foundling and a bastard; you are an imposture on the world you rule; you are the little fool that once took my jewels and toys, and was tempted, for my sake, to the house of Coriolis.' I cannot say this to her on mere conjecture, mere supposition?"

She understood, and stood thinking awhile; her strong teeth gnawing her nether lip. Then suddenly a dull, cruel gleam shot over her face.

"See here; there is one of her men who came down to Villiers with her, who has got into love with little Laure at my dairy. He is always there; after no good, but I let him come; I have heard a great deal of *her* so. And he told me one thing. There is a steward very bitter against her because she dismissed him, an old man who lives now with his son-in law, Lobesq, the jeweler, in Paris. He might tell you somewhat? It is possible, my lord. I know Laure's lover said once that he believed the old man would hurt his mistress if he could, though he did not see what means he ever would be able to find."

He heard her thoughtfully.

"Lobesq? I have had dealings with him. I can learn this with ease. You are a wise woman, Veuillot. You see—since the honor of my house will be involved in both the past and the future of this dainty duchess whom my father loves—it is needful, as it would not otherwise be, that I should reach the truth, the whole truth, of her history."

She laughed grimly, with a sardonic appreciation of the sophistry in which he veiled his own vengeance in solicitude for the dignity of his race.

"No doubt, my lord," she said, curtly. "As for me—I am a woman—I want only to taste a drop of revenge for the pretty fashion in which that bastard called us once a set of senseless peasants! You great aristocrats are careful of honor, of course; a little vengeance does for us! And what is it you will do now?"

"I will go to Paris. I must leave my regrets and apologies to the fair duchess for quitting Villiers so hastily ere she has risen, and without presentation to her."

She smiled at the smile on his lips.

"When she is your father's wife you will see her oftentimes enough—you will be so welcome, my lord!"

Low, coarse, debased though her intelligence was, she had the shrewdness which took her straight to the means by which she would most surely awaken the worst instincts in this nature, which had long been her study.

"She will never be his wife," he made answer, with a sound in his voice that caused her fierce heart to leap with joy.

Then he slipped a roll of gold pieces into her palm and went his ways through the acacia-thicket. She looked after him with a hard, strange look in her eyes as she thrust the gold into her bosom. In her own brute-fashion she loved this delicate, indolent, womanish aristocrat, though she loved his gold still more; and her heart beat with great dull throbs against the leather of her bodice. A sudden fear touched her.

"Had I better have left her alone?" she muttered. "He will only love her again; and—who can tell?—he will have her secret, he may only use it to sever her from his father, he may wed with her himself,—who can tell?"

And she strode out from the acacia shadows, breaking their blossoms down with the swing of her great arm, and went across the meadows and through the lowing cattle with the glow of triumph faded, and the cloud of hatred settled on her face.

"Anyway, I have the gold," she thought, thrusting her hand into her bosom.

She did not notice, in a little shallow runlet of water that pierced the grass by the acacias, a child who was gathering water-cresses, and who hid himself among the reeds and bracken as she passed.

"Mother, I did evil to-day," said a lad of twelve, with soft, shy, brown eyes, and a tender, awed face, standing beside Ninette, who was busied counting the young apricots on her garden-wall.

She turned and looked gently on her son.

"Nay, thy crimes cannot be very dark, my Victor. What is this thing?"

"I did a shameful thing, mother. I was a spy!"

"A spy!"—she echoed the word in horror, thinking in

an instant of the chevaliers of the poniard, of whom her grandsire had sung in her infancy.

"Yes," murmured the lad. "I did not mean it. I had no thought: but I could not help listening. I heard without hearing—you know?—and then I stayed and heard more, because I wished. It was very shameful, I know. But what they said seemed so strange."

"What who said?"

"Annette Veuillot and the young lord."

His mother's face darkened.

"The young lord? Is he come back? It was his carriage, then, that came through so late; your father had to get up for it. Veuillot—she was never a good woman. But what can she have to do with dainty aristocrats like Chanrellon?"

"I do not know, rightly. But I can tell you every word I heard, mother."

Ninette hesitated—spurred by intense inquisitive desire, withheld by a sturdy sense of honor.

"It seems wrong for me to listen," she said, at length. "Yet children should keep nothing from their mothers. Well, tell me, then; I can tell Tricotrin afterward. He always knows what is best."

"It was just this," pursued the boy, in a rapid whisper. "You know the little brook that runs all through the dairy meadows? I was getting water-cresses in it at sunrise this morning. You know that great cluster of acacia-trees just behind the dairy-houses? They are so thick with bloom now, they would hide a hundred men. Well—as I was stooping in the brook after the cress, I heard Veuillot's voice. I crept nearer,—the rushes and the burdock grew so thick there that they hid me,—and I saw her, and my lord Chanrellon also. They were talking, and Veuillot had got her pail on her head. She is so ugly, mother, I wonder he does not talk instead to Laure? Laure is so pretty——"

"But what were they saying?" asked Ninette, impatiently, taking a slug from the wall.

"Well—all this," answered her son; and he told what he had overheard, confusedly enough, but giving it all weight and emphasis he could in his wonder.

"And then he turned away," ended Victor, at the close of his long recital. "And she went too,—passing me quite close; and I heard her mutter, 'Anyway, I have the gold.' But is it not strange? What could it mean? Who is it they can think that splendid duchess is?"

"I do not know," murmured his mother, while her ruddy face turned pale. She did not know, but she guessed.

"*He* never said the child was dead," she thought to herself as she stripped a leaf off, so that a young apricot might get "gilded," as the people call it.

Then she turned and laid her hand on her son's forehead.

"Victor—promise me to speak of this to no living soul; not even to your sisters."

"I promise, mother."

"Right," she said, simply. "I fear there is wickedness afoot. That Veuillot was never a good woman. In the evening you get me the mule saddled, and I will go see Tricotrin."

But when in the evening she rode the mule down into the little hollow, where the sign of the Silver Stag swung above its hollyhocks and its fruit-trees, the keeper of the tavern lamented, with many regretful phrases, that his beloved guest was gone.

"Where is he gone?" asked Ninette, anxiously.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah! who ever knows where Tricotrin is gone, or is going? He took his knapsack, and when he takes his knapsack he commonly goes for good. Besides, you know," he pursued, sinking his voice to a low whisper, and glancing around as though his straight, tall hollyhocks were officers of the law, "you know,—they say,—the students are up again in Paris; and when there is anything of that sort, Tricotrin is sure to be there ready for it."

Ninette turned the head of her mule sadly homeward, thinking nothing of the students and their riots, but thinking much of her foiled purpose. In her own heart she was certain of what the drift of the talk that her boy had overheard must have been. She had not forgotten the days when the Prince Fainéant had taken his golden

gifts under the beechen-tree,—and she felt that when the Waif of the Loire had died to the peasantry, she had been translated to that marvelous sphere whereof they had only far-off glimpses, and vague, intangible, hazy conceptions.

"Tricotrin should have known," she said to herself over and over again as the mule paced slowly homeward, nodding his lazy head, and shaking his belled bridle, and stopping to graze at his pleasure on the wayside grasses.

Once she thought of going straight up to the great house, and begging audience of the one whom that wickedness of the woman Veuillot's menaced, and telling all to her with frankness and without fear. But she did not dare.

This duchess was so great a personage; she had no surety of her own suspicions being right, they were mere wild conjecture; she had but the word of her son, a child of twelve, with which to bear up her statement. And moreover, who could tell how her lord would resent such insults to his guest, such accusation to his son?

And Ninette, though generous and honest as the day, and in many things courageous, was a true woman. She thought of her husband's employment, of her children's welfare, of her happy home in the little, bright, ivy-hung lodge,—she could not endanger all these.

So she held her peace, and went sadly homeward in the hot, late evening time. In the porch there was a gay group, Victor and his sisters, and little Raoul, with his wondrous cuirassier, and Paulin, who, although an equerry, deigned to be not a little in love with the black-eyed elder daughter of the lodge.

The girl turned to her mother in unaffected concern—

"Oh, mère,—that beautiful duchess is ill."

"Ill!"—Ninette's eyes met her son's.

"Yes," interposed the equerry. "Her women found her in a swoon last night, and she has not risen to-day; though she will insist, I dare say, on going to Paris for that fête she is to give to the princes. The physicians speak of fever. Mademoiselle Marie's kind little heart is quite distressed for Miladi."

"Dost thou think because a woman is a duchess she

must never suffer, Marie?" said Ninette, somewhat roughly, going within to lay aside her great cloak.

"There is evil against her, mère?" whispered Victor.

"Yes, I fear there is evil," said his mother, with a sigh. "And I could not see Tricotrin!"

CHAPTER LXIV.

WHILE Ninette sought for him at the tavern, and rode her mule back in sorrow and perplexity, he was sitting on the oak settle within the porch of the little river-house, looking out down the reach of the stream.

All things were still. The cat slept, curled among violet-roots. The fowls and pigeons were gone to roost. The swallows had ceased their fluttering and murmuring among the ivy. The little Lorraine girl had gone to her own people. The dead had been borne out, by tender, reverent hands, through the green garden ways, and down the water-steps, and into the waiting boat; and grand'mère had been left to her last resting-place under the blossoming acacias of the vine country of her birth.

In the deserted house there was no sound; the gathered roses had withered, and hung their heads; the clock had stopped, for none had remembered to wind its works; on the brick hearth there was no fire; the evening shadows stole softly through all the little desolate chambers. On a chestnut-bough outside the door even Mistigri was silent, and very quiet, watching with her black sad eyes the flitting of the bats and owls.

His own gaze never wandered from the river, which was half in shadow, half in light, as the sun went down. His thoughts were with the old lost years.

Before his sight there hovered the gay and graceful shapes of a child at play among the tall scarlet bean-flowers; of a child swaying on the lithe earth-drooping branch of a beech-tree; of a child leaning over the side of a

brown boat, and dipping her arms down into the water, and laughing when the keel grated on the rocky shore, and singing—singing ever like the birds at spring-time—from early dawn all through the day, till nightfall; of a child with the glad swift voice of childhood and the dark dreaming gaze of a woman, and all the fond, fair, innocent freedom of a forest-creature taught human love, but knowing naught of human fear.

The time had been when he, in his madness, had once dreamed that she like the young forest-thing would have returned to the hand that had fed and to the home that had sheltered her, as the fawn returns affrighted by the noise of the hunters, and by the bitterness of the water-springs, and by the gall of the collar, and by the width of the great plains in the new lands of its wandering.

But he had been in error. His fawn had gone where the pastures were palace-gardens, and the brooks were the well-springs of pleasure, and the thickets bore the honey-laden buds of triumph, and the gilded collar was but a jeweled bauble by the chimes of whose bells she could lure all other herds to follow her.

And he sat alone in the little house by the river.

The sun set; the glow faded off the water; the dreaming hum of night-gnats was the only sound on the air; the dews fell thick on grass, and leaf, and blossom. He never stirred; he never took his gaze from off the gliding current. For him the hushed night-air was filled with the echoes of a young voice that never more would sound through that familiar place; for him the shadowy solitude was haunted by the vision of a young face that never more would smile on that deserted home.

And thus his recompense came to him; thus her debt was paid, in that common wage of bitterness and suffering whereby woman often requites the love of man, and fate ever requites the life that follows the law of mercy and forgets itself.

A step sounded on the rocky landing-stair. He started, and slowly arose; in the full, lustrous moonlight that now streamed over land and stream, he saw the one for whom he had waited.

He motioned his hand behind him.

"Go within, Gervase; all is yours."

The young peasant, hardy, sun-bronzed, strong as an ox of the field, trembled like a child.

"Ah! What can I say?—how can I thank you? Such priceless goodness!——"

"Chut! Goodness to enable a man to marry! I never heard that before. Were it goodness to give you a knife whereby you could cut your throat?"

Gervase smiled; but his mouth quivered with strong emotion, which, save for his five-and-twenty years of manhood, would have found relief in tears.

"It is goodness that gives heaven upon earth!" he murmured. "You know—all her youth must have gone by; I am so poor, and she is only a little servant-maiden; and when one works so hard, so hard, the eyes get dim, and the hair gets gray, and the time of age comes so soon!——"

"I know! And you—you think there is naught upon earth like that little servant-maiden! Well—so best. Let it last."

"But how can I ever repay you?"

"Hush! Think you not that, when Napoleon Bonaparte lay dying, the memory of that Alpine shepherd whom he made happy with the gift of a meadow and a homestead, was sweeter to him than the memories of all his victories? Besides—you will pay me by taking heed of all these dumb things, all these birds, all these trees."

The young man bent before him, with tender, tremulous reverence.

"They shall be as sacred to me as *she!*"

"That is enough! And now—go within. I am late, and must lose no more time."

"Is it true, then?" the peasant asked, wistfully, "true that the boulevards have risen?"

"No. But it is true that the students may rise. Rise—to be massacred. Go within, Gervase—I would start alone."

"But—if there be massacres?" gasped the youth, mistaking his answer. "If harm come to you? If we see you no more?"

"Pooh! Do you not remember?—I am the Wander-

ing Jew! Well—if harm do, if even Ahasuerus be given the divine gift of death, I have had a care that all this shall be for thee and thine. For you are gentle-natured and worthy of trust, Gervase. And when I die—if I die—make my grave yonder, under that great old beech, where I shall hear the singing of the river forever, and my people will know where I lie."

He smiled as he spoke; but there was that in the smile which only deepened the lingering and wistful melancholy of the words.

Gervase glanced up, and caught the look upon his face, and trembled with a vague sense of near calamity.

"Farewell," said Tricotrin, with another backward gesture of his hand toward the house.

The young peasant obeyed it, as a dog obeys a sign. He himself went down by the stone steps to the water's edge, and entered the little boat which waited there among the sand and sedges. He paused, with the oar resting on the bank, and looked long—as men look on what they leave forever—at the familiar homely place, with the stars of the midsummer-eve shining above its ivy-covered roof and on its ivy-shrouded casements.

He looked long: then let his oars fall, and drifted down the stream.

When the youth stole forth under the cover of the boughs, and gazed out down the course of the river, the little boat was far away, floating darkly, like a leaf adrift, upon the broad, white, starlit reach of the river.

He was gone—never more to return to the home which the Waif once had shared with the swallows.

CHAPTER LXV.

In the dusky hot close of the late summer day in which he reached Paris, there met him one of the brethren of that religious community, who commonly called him their Alp-dog of travail and trouvaille, who brought them so many well-nigh lost lives, found, half frozen, under the

snows of abject poverty, or in the crevasses of bottomless crime. Of creeds he had no love; of priests he had as little; but he knew that these men were of pure zeal, of sincere faith, and of a charity which labored unceasingly, and gave its ministrations without boundaries of code or cadence. He honored them, and aided them, and they—loved him in return, and felt before him something of that wonder with which the early leaders of their church saw the virtues of their own evangel surpassed in the pagan Julian.

In the sultry angry evening the monk paused to greet him.

"It is you, Tricotrin?" he said, with welcome shining in his sad sunken eyes. "You have been long absent?"

"Yes: who would stay beneath tile and slate, in this weather, if he could have the roofing of green leaves and pine-branches?"

"Well—there is ever work to be found and done in the cities."

"Doubtless; but there ought not always to be the doing of work in this life of ours; Nature gave us beauty and pleasure, we have a right to be still, and idle, and enjoy the twain sometimes. But—here you and I do not think alike. Tell me, how has it been with that poor wretch I brought to your doors, after the thieves' burning?"

"It is very ill with him. He has never recovered; he dies by inches. He has never left the bed on which we first laid him. His lower limbs are dead. But his brain is clear enough; he talks at times with a terrible wit and irony. He must some day have known the glittering side of the great world's vices. He has asked often for you,—not by name, indeed, but for the one who saved him. I have sought for you often; for at times he is hard to pacify, because we do not take you to his side. We have sent to all your usual haunts, but we could not hear of you. You will come and see him—now?"

Tricotrin made no answer.

"He cannot live," the monk pursued. "A few days—or weeks at uttermost—will close his life. You will

come to him? It seems to me that he has somewhat on his mind that he desires to impart. You will come?"

"You are certain he cannot survive?"

"Certain. It is impossible."

Tricotrin paused some moments, silent still; then he raised his head.

"Yes: I will come to-morrow afternoon."

Then he bade the brother farewell, and went on his way with his knapsack on his shoulders, and the dust on his feet, and the monkey on his wrist; but, for once, with no song on his lips.

On the morrow he kept his tryst.

The great, dark, frowning pile of the hospital loomed through the gay sunlight of a lustrous and cloudless day. The bell rang dully through the stillness like a toll for a passing soul. The small postern door within the entrance-gates slowly unclosed. The brethren welcomed him with few, terse words, and led the way to the quaint, noiseless, cloistered nook where Paulus Canaris lay dying—a little naked cell, looking out upon a court where a single grape-vine, thrusting forth green leaves and green clusters, alone recalled the light and loveliness of the year's rich summer-time.

The Greek was stretched, exhausted and with his lower limbs paralyzed; maimed and disfigured still from the flames, yet killed, less by the fire than by the vices of his own past. The monk went to him, and said a few words: then left the cell, closing the heavy door behind him. The gaze of Canaris fastened with a great amazement, with a great awe, upon the face of his visitant. All his emaciated frame trembled like a leaf.

On Tricotrin the sun shone full.

"Great Heaven!" cried the Greek, with the dews standing on his brow. "Speak to me:—speak!—are you a living man, or only the wraith of the dead?"

"I was once the boy whom you wronged," he answered, simply; there was no passion in his voice, only an unutterable scorn—the scorn of truth and of courage—for a traitor.

"I knew—I knew!" muttered the dying wretch. "I knew that night when you dragged me from the fires; I

never dreamed it until then. It was the look in your eyes that told me—that look!"

Tricotrin answered nothing; he stood at the foot of the pallet, while the midsummer light shone like an aureole on his head.

What could he say to this man?—whose whole life had been one long perfidy, whose whole existence had been one long assassination of peace, and faith, and honor?

The Greek shivered, and buried his face, and lay silent and sore afraid. It was to him as a resurrection from the grave

"You know that I stole the jewels?" he cried, suddenly, looking upward at that sun-circled head as at an avenging angel.

"I did know it—I saw you in the act."

"Yet you never exposed me?—you never declared your own innocence?"

"I was falsely accused. Those who could so accuse me were unworthy of proof of their error:—as you were beneath vengeance when you stood by silent in your sin. Oh, my God!" he cried, a thousand memories awaking in him, and breaking forth in rapid, burning words. "I was a youth; I remembered only that I came of free races and bold blood, that I would never live beneath the roof where my honor had been outraged, that I would never bear the titles of a father who insulted and who hated me. I was too proud to clear myself of that foul, felonious charge; I was too full of scorn to harm so vile a thing as you;—I only longed for the sweet wild liberty of my mother's shores, for the sea-breezes of freedom and danger, for the joy of life untrammeled by pomps and untainted by hatred. I was only a boy; a boy full of chivalrous love of wounded faith, of thirst for a forest-animal's innocent, dauntless, wandering days. I never remembered that, in leaving you beside my brother, I left an adder in the purples I abandoned to him;—I never thought that, knowing how I spared you, you would feed and fatten on the bounty of my race in pampered luxury for years, and stain its honor, in return, by stealth, at the very hearth whose fires had warmed you. I never thought—I was a child, and acted in a child's headlong

sacrifice and passion—I spared you, and you rewarded me a score years later by stabbing in the dark the only creature that I loved!"

The words died in his throat. Looking on this man, the bitterness of hate consumed him; the dead wrongs of his boyhood rose up from their distant graves.

The Greek cowered down, shuddering as under a rain of blows. He knew well what his sins had been against that lofty, generous, unsuspecting, northern race, which had fed, and clothed, and sheltered, and trusted him:—sins which, budding first in thefts of gems to sate the boyish avarice of a born gambler, had found their latest crown in thefts of a wife's love and of a husband's honor:—sins born at their earliest and their latest from one root, a devil's envy of the power and wealth and ease of those who had succored, and pampered, and lifted him from a hireling's servitude to a friend's estate. In that hour all the vileness of his life came out before his sight, and appalled him with an exceeding horror. His brain was giddy; his soul sick; he could only stare blankly at the face above him, and at the blinding light of a summer day's sun.

"You have lived like this!" he gasped. "And all deemed you dead,—dead in that ring of water. I wronged you—yes, heavily. I dared not say I stole the diamonds to pay a debt of the dice; and your father always smiled most on me when most I hurt you—so I kept silence. Tell me,—you have been content?"

A smile, that blinded him like the sunbeams, came on his listener's face.

"Content! There are greater things than contentment."

"But have you never regretted?"

"Never."

"What? Is it possible? Christ! how strange you are! All that men covet lay in your hands; and you—you flung them aside thus! Yet—since you do thus live,—*he* cannot justly own his lands, his gold, his earldom?"

"Silence! Dare you to speak his name?—you—the vile paramour of his accursed wife!"

The Greek made no reply: still staring at him with the same half-senseless, half-incredulous stupor of amaze.

To the Athenian—who had been born in servitude, and stolen his way to pleasure through secret sin, and sold his soul for the mere touch of gold, and risen by foul means into the light of affluence, and fallen again through the gambler's avarice and the traitor's crimes into that lowest deep wherein Death now had found him —this renunciation, this contentment, this abandonment of honors and riches for the mere sweet sake of freedom, were mysteries that bewildered and appalled him, half sunk in the stupors of dissolution as were his memories and his senses.

"And you have never regretted!" he murmured over and over again.

Tricotrin turned from him, and gazed out to where the late vine budded in its deserted home. He had never regretted—never save once, when he had seen the white and purple violets in the bosom of a woman.

His thoughts wandered far back, over the length of many years, to that long-perished time when of his own will he had forsaken the treasures, and the honors, and the luxurious ease, of his high heritage, to go forth to the freedom of his mother's people, to the simplicities of a life without ceremonial and care.

It had been a boy's wild generosity, a boy's vivid passion, a boy's headlong impulse, which had sent him forth from the home of his birthright, so that the child whom he loved might reign there in his stead; so that he should owe naught to a race which had scorned and had wounded his mother; so that he should be delivered forever from the trammels of greatness which galled the sea-lion's spirit within him; so that he should be freed forever to live his own life, and to roam wheresoever he would, unchained, unarraigned, uncrowned.

The daring, hardy blood of the sea-born Armorican races had been in him. There had lived in him the old dauntless hardy pride of the Breton peasants, "*Me zo deuzar armorig,*" when they stood, loyal but equal, before their haughtiest seigneur of Rohan, Rochefort, or Rochejaquelin races. He had scorned the gilded cages

of riches and of rank, and broken his silken bonds as a young lion-cub breaks its cords, disdaining to hold what was begrudged to him, craving only the open air, and the breath of the forest, the salt waves, and the sweep of the winds.

He had gone, leaving his crowns to other brows, his gold to other hands; gone, while they deemed him dead, to the liberty for which he was athirst. Gone to the shores where his mother's fleet feet had raced with the incoming tides, where her eyes had gazed at the sun like the eagle's; where the waves, and the breeze, and the storms had given her beauty their grandeur, and her courage their strength, and her soul their liberty, which lived again in his. Gone to those years of freedom, and gladness, and love, and mirth, and charity, which were uttered in one word to the people that loved him—the word of his self-chosen title—Tricotrin.

Poor, indeed, he ever had been in the coinage of worldly wealth. Some little gold stored away in the hollow of a rock, and bequeathed to him by one of his mother's brethren, to whom he was dear, and who alone knew whence the boy, who wandered to their western shore, had come, made all his portion. But he had been rich in every other thing beyond compare—rich as with the golden light of suns that never set.

A king without a diadem, a priest without a stole, a soldier without a sword, a leader whose hosts were unseen of the world, a poet whose melodies asked no answer from the trumpet of fame, a sovereign whose territory was meted by no measuring-rod, but stretched wherever men enjoyed or suffered,—he had lived his life.

And regret had never touched him. His years had been sweet and mellow, and full of color and melody, and fair to his sight and his senses. He had never regretted —never save once, when, out of the purest and holiest of his acts, there had arisen the greatest bitterness that he had ever known.

The Greek, still gazing at him like one half blinded, strove to raise his feeble frame and husband his sinking breath. He was not repentant, not remorseful; he had long ere then killed his conscience, and the sins he had

sinned seemed precious to him; they were the relics of his youth, the laurels of his prowess, the things that told him all he had once been. But, in some dim sense, he felt the wonder and the greatness of this abdication, as he felt those of that mercy which, knowing him a foe so vile, yet had dealt with him as with one innocent.

"Are you a madman? or a god?" he muttered. "You must be one or other. And you have never regretted! —you must be made of other stuff than mere humanity. To lose all *that*—to lay it down—and never long to seize it once again! You must be more or less than man! Such a heritage! such a heritage!"

His hearer's voice crossed his words, with a grave eloquence of scorn in it.

"Whatever I be, you, of all men, can least appraise my act or motive. Speak no more of that dead time; all the issue of it lies with you. I do not care to raise reproach against a dying wretch; nor do I care to linger with you. You desired to see me:—wherefore, if there be no remorse in you toward Estmere?"

"There is none in me!" said the Greek, with sudden fierceness. "I hated him always! Oh, he was liberal, gracious, full of generous gifts,—I know that,—but I hated him. He was so just, so proud, so calm, so far above me, so wedded to stern truth. He was a living rebuke; I hated him. I stole his wife's love—yes; I stole her beauty, I made that high-born Austrian woman mine. But though I dishonored his name, I could not dishonor him: that was what went so bitter with me."

"Peace! If you cannot speak his name for pardon and repentance, do not dare to breathe it in my hearing!"

"You love him still? when he reigns in your stead, when he sits in your throne! But wait—wait an instant —and hear me. You have twice done good toward me: you, to whom I ever did evil in the time of your childhood. I have no remorse in me With my last breath I shall curse the world and all in it. But I would tell you one thing ere I die; it may serve you. That child whom you reared——"

His hearer turned swiftly, struck as by a sharp blow.

"What of her?"

A cynical smile flitted over the blackened, haggard face of Canaris.

"Ah, there is one thing you regret, is there not? Well, that child is now Duchess de Lirà. How have I known it? Men, that live in the depths of infamy I have lived in, know all things. We are sewer-rats—yes—but we undermine palaces! Look you! after you gave me my 'chance' I watched you. I did not dream you were anything save what I heard; but I did not lose sight of your life. I saw that fair thing by your side one night in Paris. There was a look in her face, a glance, a smile, no matter what, that brought a fancy to my thoughts, a memory to my mind. I saw a likeness in her. It set me to seek out her history; more in idleness than aught else. I was miserably poor, and had not then taught myself the trades of coarser crime. I played long with this fancy; at length I learned its secret. When I had learned it, it was of no use to me. The child was gone from you; I could not tell where. Years went by; I have been in the prisons, in the galleys. One day this winter, a great lady gave me a silver piece for lifting her little dog out of the mud as she went to her carriage; the face was the same face, the same fancy struck me. I watched and waited, and strung this and that hint together; I saw you once admitted to her hotel; I guessed the truth, though I did not know it till your look a moment since told me I had guessed aright. This Duchess de Lirà is the foundling you harbored—is it not so? Well, and of what stock did that stray child come?"

"If you know, say! say, for God's sake!"

"Stoop your head to my ear, then. Ah, what wealth this had been to me if I had lived, and owned my old cunning, and held it as a sword that might fall at any moment above that proud, delicate head! Bend nearer, that I may whisper it; a great lady's honor must not be tainted aloud! Now, listen; will you curse her, I wonder?"

"Speak out!" cried his hearer, in an unendurable torture. "If, for once, you do not lie—speak out, and say all you know."

"All I know!" echoed the Greek, with a dreary cyn-

icism upon his lips. "Nay! I know so much—I was a slave, that mastered more than my lords; I was a pampered spaniel, that nestled in patrician bosoms; I was a thing that they spurned with their speech in the world, but caressed with their lips in their privacy: those lofty, languid, fair, sensual women! All I know!—pshaw!—would you have me tell lords they are bastards; would you have me tell virgins they are harlots? Well, well! be not angered, nor in haste. I would gather my memories,—let me think,—in peace. We spoke of the dainty duchess?—this foundling you fed on brown loaves and goat's milk, and who pays you by scattering the mud of her chariot-wheel upon you as she sweeps by? You would be told of the woman who bore her? Well, that woman is called Coriolis."

A loud cry rang across his words—the cry of an unutterable horror. The hands of Tricotrin seized him where he lay.

"You lie! you painted snake! When ever yet did you stir save to poison? You lie!—oh devil! that you stood in health and in strength before me, that I could deal with you as you merit!"

The white lips of the Athenian grew paler still with fear as he heard; but for once he had spoken truth, and he had that courage which all truth confers.

"I have not lied," he said, slowly; "at the least, not willingly. She is the daughter of Coriolis. Take thought. Is there no kinship in their regard? They have likeness in unlikeness,—that bright glitter of hair, that mouth like a scarlet blossom, that smile that is so sunlit, yet so cold. They are dissimilar also, indeed, as are the water-lilies of regal lakes and the poisoned lilies of Indian swamps; but, like them, they have likeness."

His listener's grasp fell from him; Tricotrin covered his face with his hands, and shuddered, and was still.

The vision of Coriolis rose before him as he had beheld it in her youth; and he remembered the enchantment of its smile, and saw in it what he had never seen, and knew that the truth had been uttered,—the abhorred, polluted, ghastly truth which broke in on him with the merciless flash of the electric light, that breaks the dark-

ness only to leave it tenfold blacker, thicker, more hideous, than ere its gloom was pierced.

But still he strove for blindness, still he would not behold what that flash of light had revealed. He was as one to whom the glare of the lightning has shown some beloved and lovely face, stricken white and lifeless, floating on some deep and caverned pool.

"Likeness! likeness!" he echoed, wildly. "You dare say this thing on your mere sickly fancy, your mere delirious delusion! Your brain teems with vague shapes as you lie in your loneliness; and you dare thrust these forward as facts and as truths? Gold threads in the hair—a rose-bloom on the mouth—fine things indeed to be pointed to as warrants of kinship, as registries of birth——!"

"Wait," said Canaris, with his old malice gleaming in his eyes, tempered by a new emotion of pity and regret. "Do not think that I speak so idly, or that I give voice to death-bed vagaries. I tell you a fact that I learned, in case that fact ever may serve you The likeness I saw; but that is nothing. How I know the truth came by pure hazard, as most things do after all, despite men's prescience and scheming. I knew Gérant, Coriolis' first lover,—you remember his fame on the lyric theaters?—knew him well. I was his confidant at the time when he took that pretty thing from her sea-cabin to bring her out on the stage. I thought her a lovely fool, and scarce saw, myself, what he would do with her; but Gérant knew better. He discerned genius, and—half a million of francs yearly, in her. Well, there was only one obstacle to her flight with him: her child by Bruno. Coriolis half loved and half hated it, so Gérant told me. He cursed it often enough, himself, and would have thrown it in the sea for his part. But she had a curious reluctance to leave it to her husband; she thought he would murder it in his first passion. She wished to be rid of it, but she wished to know all was well with it. It was a female child, called, I think, like her,—Madelon. Gérant, to content her, arranged with a woman he knew,—a chorus-singer, horribly poor, and who had a throat-affection, so that she could no longer sing,—to steal the infant herself when

the house should be empty, in the first excitement of the fisher-folk over the disappearance of Bruno's wife, and get away with it out of the province. That was done. The simple people supposed the child was gone with its mother. Gérant gave the woman a large sum to do it, for it would have stood, of course, as a crime in the law. Some year or so afterward, when Madelon Bruno had made her mark upon Paris, and had become Coriolis, I asked Gérant how his contrivance had answered. He swore bitterly, and said the little wretch had died of fever, and he wished its mother was dead also! She had just broken with him for Prince Anatôle, and made mirth of him for all the money he had expended in insuring her stage-successes—money which he never saw back again. Now, I never once remembered this story of the child until I saw the face of the girl by your side one festival-night in Paris, and learned she was only a foundling whom you had taken the caprice of protecting. Then I said in my soul, 'That girl is Madelon Bruno: and the daughter of Coriolis did not die.'"

He paused, exhausted by his lengthened speech: Tricotrin's hard convulsive breathing alone stirred the silence.

"This is no proof!" he muttered, fiercely, at length. "This is but suspicion, conjecture, imagination. The child died; you heard that from Gérant; why should you dream that she—she——"

"I do not dream; I know," resumed Canaris. "I tell it slowly, for I am feeble. But patience—you will be contented! When I saw that girl in Paris, Gérant had been long dead. But I remember the name of the chorus-singer: it was Rose Léroux. I always taught myself to remember names: they are so useful. I inquired for her; I heard with difficulty, for people so soon forget, that she had been a long while out of the country, had returned, had committed a robbery with violence on an old woman, and was then at the galleys. Well—I went thither myself, not long after, for a more intellectual crime. I have not been many months released. I saw you one day this winter go into the Lirà palace; and I saw the face of its duchess. I said to myself, though it seemed like insanity,—is that his foundling throned there? is that Madelon

Bruno among the sovereigns of the earth? I could not tell; but I sought out the woman Léroux. She was among the herd at Chaumont. We had many talks together. There were no secrets between us; we had the one bond of sympathy—we had both known the Bagne. By degrees I brought her to the subject of that child of Jean Bruno's. She laughed—she is horribly ugly, and ugliest when she laughs—and told me that the child might be dead, but had not died with her. When she took it she never meant to be at the burden of keeping the child; but she wanted Gérant's money; and she always obeyed what he told her. She did not know well how to get rid of it; she kept it a year, as Gérant sent plenty of gold, storing the money up to enable her to get off to America, for she had even then done what made her uneasy of the law. Then, as he wrote her sharply word that she might look for but little in future, she tramped through half France on foot, with her gold and the child. She wrote back to Gérant that the little Madelon was dead of scarlet fever, and had been buried as her own natural daughter; but in truth she laid it down in the dawn one day, in the loneliest part of a wooded place by the Loire. Then she made her way swiftly to a seaport, and crossed the ocean westward. She said she should have sent the child to Coriolis; but she was afraid of rousing the wrath of Gérant, who had great power over her. She thought it no harm to leave the child in the wood; she had abandoned in like fashion one of her own, who had been picked up by a carrier and had thriven well. I asked her why she did not leave it at the foundling hospital; she said she had cause even then to shun cities; and besides—she hated Coriolis, she had loved Gérant—she desired the baby Madelon to perish, though she said she could not hold it under the water to kill it, its eyes were so pretty. I asked her what name the child bore with her: she said it could barely speak, but called itself Viva, from hearing the woman of the cottage, where she had hid all the year with it, call a spaniel dog by that name continually. I asked her also if she knew the fate of the child: she said no—she had not given it two thoughts since that time, until I re-

called Gérant's name to her. That is all. Are you satisfied? If you want more, go to Rose Léroux up at Chaumont; they know you there, though you have committed none of the crimes that are the common passports to its community. You see,—I spoke of no dream, no delusion. Well!—from Madelon Bruno the actress to Madelon Bruno the duchess, it is but a step! Both have sold their beauty, and one has her diamonds set round a marriage-ring, and the other her diamonds set round a drinking-cup; one has a little higher price than the other; that is all! It is a pity I lie here useless and helpless; what wealth I would have made out of this history! And you—and you—will do nothing, save strive with all your might to spare her its knowledge. You are the great spendthrifts of the world:—you men who throw away your opportunities to do evil. What fortunes you miss!"

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE doors of the monastic refuge once more unclosed, and Tricotrin passed out into the world of living men.

The full ardent light of the late day was about him as he went; but his eyes were blind to it, and he moved onward like one drunk and stupefied with wine.

There was no hope left in him that this thing were false. The words of the dying Athenian had carried the incisive force of truth with them. He had spoken as men do not speak when they lie, and his utterances had fallen deep into his hearer's heart, as aquafortis into metal. With less circumstantial precision than that which his narrative had borne, his listener would have felt that it was true, by the same ghastly sense of hopeless certitude wherewith the one who loves hears tidings of the death of what he loves.

A thousand memories, moreover, flashed on his mind that bore witness to their veracity; the strange dread witness of forgotten trivialities, from long-perished hours,

which arise from their graves in the past to bear testimony that kills the peace of the present. Memories of sounds, and glances, and echoes of laughter; of a cadence in the voice, of a smile on the lips. Of a child's innocent nonsense among the wild gourds of a garden, and a woman's airy frivolities on the glittering stage of a theater. Of a girl's gay form fluttering over the clover and seed-grasses of a field, and an actress's radiant figure floating before the footlights. Of a young singer who sang like the goldfinch swaying high on a broken bough, and of a great singer who sang like the mocking-bird, delighting the ears of monarchs and princes:—all that likeness in unlikeness whereof the dying man had spoken in his cynical truth started out to his sight, in witness that could not be denied, or disproved, or any longer doubted.

The bread that he had thrown upon the waters in pity for the stray fledgling bird left helplessly to drift upon their salt sea-tide, came back to him, and was bitter as ashes on his lips.

There could scarce have come to him a thing deadlier than this. He was even as a man who, gazing on the fair, sweet, gracious beauty of a woman he adores, sees, beneath it, the canker of a mortal and accursed disease, doomed, soon or late, to make it hideous in the sight of men, and draw it downward to the grave.

He had no hope. Every memory that returned to him was fraught with testimony of the truth of this history, whereby his enemy had recompensed him for rescue from the thieves' wild justice. Once when in the press of the populace at the theater of Coriolis, he had glanced, from the face of the dazzling mime whom the public applauded, to the face of the child in her little bright ruddy hood at his side. A certain sense of resemblance between them—vague, changeful, intangible—had stolen upon him, and he had thrust it away with repugnance and in contempt. The face of the woman was lovely indeed; but it was soulless and mindless as the face of a waxen, scentless, glowing-hued flower. The face of the child was careless indeed; but there was a soul in it, a soul dormant, dreaming, half awake, half lost in laughter;

but still there,—in the great, soft, shadowy eyes, on the breathless, fragrant, caressing mouth. And he had chosen then to see only the difference,—it was the likeness now that recurred to him.

And was that likeness only of feature?—only of such slight surface-things as the hue of the hair, and the arch of the lips, and the tint of the skin? Was there none in the heart and the thoughts, in the passions and impulses? in the barbaric worship of gold and color, and sensuous pomp, and arrogant display? in the cold slighting scorn for all ways save the ways of pleasure and power? in the gay merciless mockery of all love that bore not its bribes of silver and gold?

The leaven of those women who had turned aside from innocence, and honor, and obscurity, to force themselves forth into the affluence of enjoyment, the furnace of passion, the paradise of wealth, was in her. It had been in her from her earliest hour, when she had broken aside the lily-leaves in eagerness for their yellow stamens; it had been, unknown to him, his subtle antagonist, his secret conqueror, when she had refused to dwell with him because he dwelt not among princes, and could not give her the gifts that her ambitions and instincts craved so blindly and so violently. Their desires, their impulses, their evil —the evil that had made no kiss sweet to them unless a jewel purchased it, no flower fair to them unless it were the poisonous laurel of notoriety,—had been ever in her, his foe, his rival, his betrayer, driving her from him on the spur of a vague discontent, seducing her from his arms with the whispers of that tempter which does the chief portion of Mephistophiles' work,—the tempter of feminine vanity and unrest.

These had been in her, as there had also been the poetic fancies of the peasant-girl who had made her friends from the robins of the pine-forests of Lirà, and the loyal, tender, generous temper of the sailor of the Riviera. These were in her also. And,—as in her physical loveliness, the fair hues, and laughing mouth, and dazzling graces of her mother were heightened and ennobled by the dark lustrous eyes, full of the sleeping fires of the south, that had once gazed from the pain-worn, sunburned face of

Bruno, and told the tale of his desolated life,—so in her moral nature the higher and the baser instincts, the cruelties and the nobilities, the wanton weakness and the truthful courage of these conflicting and contrasted temperaments abode, ever in union and in disunion, forming the anomalous fluctuations of her life. The haughty blood of that patrician race of which Coriolis was the illicit offspring; the passionate, gentle, ignorant, heroic soul of the southern mariner; the instinctive poetry of the simple, harmless lives passed under the lonely skies of the mountain pine-woods; the ruthless greeds, the restless aspirations, the thirsty vanities of the women who had forsaken sinless love for gilded infamy;—all these lived in her. All these inspired her with those gifts, and graces, and sins, and follies, that she had once believed came from that more than mortal origin on which she had loved to muse in still sweet summer nights when her childish eyes had sought beneath broad burdock-leaves, and in dew-laden chalices of flowers, for the coming of the people of her nation, for the reign of the fairies upon earth.

He knew it; and there was no hope in him, as he went toward the dens of vice and misery at Chaumont: yet his chief thought still was of her.

If ever this truth came to her she would cry out that it would have been better that she should have been left to perish in the blindness and unconsciousness of her infancy than have lived for this shame to bow her proud head to the dust!

That absolute despair which paralyzes the courage, the faith, the strength of a man when he beholds his holiest acts change into his foes, and all his efforts as of no avail against the force of a cruel mockery of accident, came on him now, and broke the heroic temper in him, and killed the bright and clear philosophies which had withstood all lighter blows.

"He had never regretted," he had said to the man who died yonder; and he had spoken, not in the language of a sophist's hyperbole, but in the language of pure, straight, simple truth. He had never regretted, from the hour when a boy's ardent impulse for freedom and

peace, and the joy of becoming his own law and his own leader, had made him abandon the heritage that was begrudged him, for the simple birthright of liberty that came to him from his mother's people. Chance had favored him, circumstance had befriended him; he had cast greatness behind him, and he had found love; he had flung away dignities, and he had lighted on laughter; he had refused the rich savor of costly banquets since they were seasoned with gall, and he had discovered that glad contentment which gives sweetness to a cake of meal, and brings lotus-dreams with a draught of spring-water. He had owed no debt to any man; he had bound his will by no fetter; he had paid no slavery to custom; he had been yoked to no gilded chain of possession; he had shaped his own life, and had rejoiced in it; he had steeped it in the poet's idealism, the artist's color, the lover's passion, the gipsy's freedom, the scholar's meditation, and had found it exceeding fair.

It was not a life fitting for the multitude of men, but it had been fitting beyond all others for him. Because a million of field sparrows, and street sparrows, and reed sparrows build, and eat, and breed, and multiply in their low-lying nests, asking nothing better than food and wool, and all the small attainments and contentions of their communities, they will not understand that, because this is good and sufficient to them, it would be captivity and death to the bold, white-winged sea-bird that finds its joys in endless shores and boundless seas, in wild west winds and sun-flaked clouds, in rocky heights and ocean dawns, and would not change these even though famine, and peril, and tempest, be oftentimes its lot. For other men he left the city, or the field, or the duck-pool of the sparrows; for himself he took the sea-life of the gull: and he had never regretted, he had spoken the truth; never even though want, and conflict, and danger, and labor had been at times his portion; even though he had lived nameless and homeless among men. His life had been fair to him, infinitely fair; looking backward on its many-colored years he would not have exchanged it for any other, and he would not if he could, have undone the deed of his youth.

Repentance, or disquiet, or ambition had never once moved him to desire the things that he had forsaken, to lament the act of his childhood, to desire to return to those pleasant places from which he had issued self-exiled forever. He had never regretted.

It was only now, when out of the gentle pity which he had felt for a stray child, his deadliest anguish came, that the desolation of dead hopes chilled his veins; and that he thought in the bitterness of his soul, "it was well said—call no life happy until its last day is seen."

The early evening had come by the hour he reached Chaumont; a stormy, crimson close of a midsummer day, with thunder-clouds rolling, unbroken, over the city.

"Where is Mi Minoux?" he asked of the people, giving them the password of their community. They answered him that their chief was there, in his own den; a lion whom no foe durst beard in his lair, a ruler whose word was as omnipotent, and vengeance as terrible, as though in lieu of his rage he had worn purples.

To that den he went straightway.

The Patron, heavy and spent from a night-long debauch to which a great robbery of alcohol and wine had given a rare power of furious indulgence, was stretched half asleep on a pile of sacks; his enormous limbs motionless like a gorged hyena's, his naked arms knotted above his head, his bloodshot eyes half closed. His cave was his audience-hall, his banqueting-room, his treasure-house, his shambles, his sleeping-chamber, his hall of judgment, all in one. Here and there gleams of smelted gold or broken jewels glistened out of the straw and ashes that strewed the ground; here and there a stain of blood darkened the bare rocky floor; a slaughtered lamb lay in one corner, a keg of wine stood half emptied in another. Watching him, there crouched, ready to spring up in obedience to his slightest sign, the half-nude form of the youngest of the women that he loved, with an Eastern look in her deep dark eyes, and a string of gold coins on her raven hair, and a jewel hung on her brown bosom. She was a greyhound that her master's whip lashed into abject submission, yet round whose throat he would lock

ded collar.

He sprang to his feet as he heard a strange step; awake and alert on the instant with the vigilance of one who knows that his whole life is a crime, and that with every moment he lives free he robs the law of its rightful prey. As he saw who came he cast aside the knife that he had seized, and over his bloated face a gleam, that was a smile, passed for the instant. He raised himself almost on his elbow from his bed of sacks with a laugh.

"It is you! Do you come to beg another life? I will not promise you to let the next off so easily."

Tricotrin uncovered his head to the crouching girl with a grave courtesy, that made her eyes dilate in wonder. She was a thing that was alternately beaten with a whip and loaded with the fruits of theft; she knew only brutal blows, and as brutal caresses.

"Do not belie yourself, Mi Minoux," he said, quietly. "Do not be ashamed of the one better action of your life. No: I come for a simple thing—to ask you if you have among you, as I have heard, a woman called Rose Léroux?"

Mi Minoux gave an indolent kick of his foot to the wanton beside him.

"Think for me, fool," he said, roughly. "Have we that name?"

"You call her fool?" said Tricotrin. "Well—truly she is one. To submit to your brutalities when she could steal out any day and sell your life to the law. Of such fools such men as you find many;—fools who love their tyrant, and are loyal, though their life is a hell."

Mi Minoux stirred uneasily. If any other living being had said this thing to him, his reply would have been to have lifted his club or drawn his pistol from his belt. Now, he felt a certain reluctant touch of shame.

"Oh, I am good enough to her—in my way," he muttered. "You would not leave me, Néra, because I kick you sometimes, or curse you a little?"

"Never!" she said, timidly and softly.

She did, indeed, love this man, whose wooing had been a union of violence and fraud, and whose kiss was commonly followed with a blow.

"Well—well!" he said, hoarsely, moved despite himself. "I never want to hurt you; you know that. It is

only—you see, Tricotrin, it seems natural to beat dogs and women. They will not do well without. If they have not the stick, they want their own way. Léroux, you ask me?—Léroux? Yes; we have her, I know. What has she done?"

"I wish to speak with her; that is all."

"You do not want to give her up to the tribunals?"

"No. I do not want to do so."

"It must be for something bad she has done, that you ask after her? The brute has no friends."

"Poor wretch! Yes; it is for a wrong that she did once, but very long ago. I only require to question her; and I shall be glad if you can force her to tell me only the simplest truth."

"It is a hard matter to get them to tell the truth. You see—it is so much easier to lie; and they all get in the way of it. But I could order her, and she would hardly disobey, to be frank with you. You are sure it is nothing that will bring one into trouble?"

"Nothing. It cannot possibly concern you."

"Then I will take you to her. It will do me no harm to stretch myself; I am as sleepy as an owl." With many curses on the brandy that had made his eyeballs so hot and his throat so parched, he shook his ragged dress together into some sort of order, and went forth from his den to seek the lower part of Chaumont, where the woman, asked for, abode.

Mi Minoux knew all who came into this hive of crime whereof he was the center.

"You ask what Léroux is?" said the Patron, as they went along. "She is a dull, uninventive beast, with a tough will and a hard courage, but a stupid head; a woman that robs at mid-day, and lies drunk on church-steps, and is never two months out of the hands of the police. A chorus-singer?—oh, I dare say she was once; all the brains of those people lie in their lungs. Up yonder—to the right of the stair—where the red shirt hangs to dry."

Up where the tattered shirt hung on an iron spout that served as a linen-pole, was a wretched black den, full of squalor and filth; the recent rains had beaten through the

hole that served as window, and drenched the floor. The only seat was a heap of rags; there was some water in a cracked pitcher, scores of mice were scampering to and fro, scores of spiders wove their gray webs in every nook, a toad squatted in a corner; blowing on some sticks to get fire was a disheveled, scarce-clothed, black-browed woman.

"Léroux, he wants to hear something; tell him all he wishes," said Mi Minoux, in their own tongue. "This is Tricotrin; answer him as you would answer me, without lies, or it will be worse for you. If I find you tell him one falsehood, you shall have a bullet down your throat."

The woman muttered a promise of obedience. The Patron's word was law at Chaumont. She stood staring, with her black eyes lusterless but savage. She had no apprehension; she was in the lowest deep; there was nothing worse to come.

Without preface he asked her straightly, when Mi Minoux had left them:

"You are Rose Léroux, to whom the child of Madelon Bruno was confided?"

"Ninie spoke of that to me this winter," she muttered, calling the Greek by his name in that quarter. "Ninie, whom they tried to burn as a spy. What is that thing coming up for now?—it is long enough ago!"

"You are the woman who took the child? Answer me that."

"Yes; I took the child," she assented, sullenly, mindful of her chief's injunction.

"And abandoned her?"

"I left it in the wood; that was nothing. Somebody always finds them."

"Where did you leave her?"

"In a knot of trees, aside from habitations, in the Loire valley. I have forgot what village it was near. It was distant from the highroad and the plain. I tied the child down, so that it should not crawl about for anybody to notice it until I had got away some leagues. That was nothing; that did not hurt it."

The sullen self-extenuation was half-shamedly, half-

ferociously urged—pleaded against accusations that had not been made.

"What was your motive in her exposure?"

"To get rid of it."

"Why did you wish to be rid of her?"

"I wanted to get off to the west with all the money I had had for it. I could not be burdened with the little brute. If it had been Gérant's child, it would have been different; I would have done well for it; but he would not pay me more for this thing of Jean Bruno's; and I would not go to Coriolis. I hated her—the yellow-haired, lily-skinned, laughing thing! Gérant had told me she cared for the child; and I thought it might sting her to think it was dead. I had thought of that some time before; but where I kept it the woman of the house was a fool over it, and would have made an outcry if it had been missing. She thought I was miserably poor; and she fed the child almost for nothing. I had to spend none of the money on it. Else I should not have kept it a whole year. It was pretty, very pretty; I remember it. It had great black eyes like that sailor—its father: and all her yellow silk of curls. I remember it. What can you want to ask about it now? this is a score years ago, all I tell you. I never starved it, nor beat it; it was well enough with me. And as for leaving it in that wood,—it was warm weather, and I knew some one would find it; it was reaping-time, and there were people about. What have you come to me for when the thing is so old?"

She spoke with a restless, dogged, smothered dread and impatience, which, but for the command of Mi Minoux, would have found vent in wild ferocity and brutal defiance. She smote one of her bits of wood upon a mouse, and killed it; it was a relief to the violence in her, which she dared not let loose on her questioner.

He stood silent. The vague hope he had cherished was dead in him. The words and the accent of the woman bore the impress of truth. He could doubt no longer. And his heart was sick within him.

She looked at him, and spoke again, in irritation at his long silence.

"What is there to tell of that baby? You cannot have

come here for nothing. I did not think any creature knew its name. It could hardly talk when I left it: and it called itself Viva—after a dog that it liked. It lived, I suppose; or this noise would not be made. I always thought it would live; it was a child that always laughed —laughed all day long,—never whimpered and whined. Those children always fare well; they are born with silver in their mouths. That is why they smile. What do you want of me? I have done things much worse than that since."

He roused himself from his silence, and resumed his examination of her. She told the same tale in all points that the Greek had given, more fully, and with many touches that proved its veracity. There was no falsehood, no contradiction, in the narrative; it was brief, strong, naked in its wickedness;—the wickedness, old as the world, of jealous hatred, and penurious greed, interwoven and reacting one on another, and bearing their common fruitage in crime. She felt no remorse, and but scant shame. To herself it seemed as a virtue that she had not drawn a knife across the child's throat, or held its head down in the mill-stream. All things are comparative; and, by comparison, this abstinence was marvelous and deserving of praise in her sight.

He endeavored vainly to shake her statements, or confuse her memories. She was speaking the truth, and he saw it:—saw that all hope was dead; and that for the life that he loved, there was no birthright save the dishonor of Coriolis.

"You will not harm me for this?" said the woman, doggedly, when she had ended. "I have told you the truth, as Mi Minoux bade me; you will not go and use it against me?"

He sighed in weariness and sickness of heart:

"Poor wretch! Is treachery so common with you? No; you are safe with me. You did a great crime,—whose roots and branches stretch where you never dream, —but you shall have no chastisement for utterance of the truth."

She regarded him with curious, dull wonder. She did not understand, but she felt vaguely that the law would not be *summoned* to deal with her.

"Does the child live?" she asked, abruptly.

"Yes—the child lives."

"And it is well with her?"

"Very well."

She bit her stick, that had killed the mouse, savagely with her strong teeth.

"Ah!—she thrives; she has Madelon's blood in her. Look,—Madelon drove that sailor mad; and sent her child away to perish; and fooled Gérant, and cheated him of all his wealth, to make her triumphs; and robbed her lovers in a day of more than I robbed from the streets in a twelvemonth; and all she does prospers. She is called Coriolis: she is rich; she eats, and drinks, and laughs, and takes her pleasure; she is wooed by princes, and fingers the purses of kings. She thieves, and she cheats, and she murders;—but she prospers. And we—we go to the galleys!"

And she slew another little brown mouse with her billet of wood; the contrast of crime proscribed, and crime rewarded, was bitter.

What made the difference?

She herself had been handsome in the time of her youth, though now disfigured by drink and disease; she had been willing to sin in any fashion that came to her; she had been without scruple, without mercy, without remorse; she could not lay to her charge one fault of the weakness of virtue, whereby she had deserved less the successes of vice. Why then had life buffeted, and proscribed, and scourged, and starved, and imprisoned her, while it had lavished all fair things upon her rival?

She did not remember that she had once had one fault from which Coriolis had ever been free:—with all her brute nature she had been unwise enough to love.

She had loved the actor Gérant with a blind, furious, once generous, once unselfish, passion, that had borne her to wreck and ruin; and which, when it had been cast aside upon itself, had made her savage, and dull, and brutalized, and cunning.

She had been at one time his devoted mistress. The weakness had brought its vengeance. She dwelt here in squalor and horror, in ignominy, in starvation: it was

only the woman who had never loved aught save nerself who lived in perpetual ease, perpetual laughter, perpetual delight.

And she slew the little creeping mouse in the violence of her envy. When life has become unutterably horrible, unutterably irredeemable, unutterably hopeless, it finds its only luxury in cruelty.

A beggar can wield the same terror over his chained dog as an emperor can wield over his fettered nation; the equality in dominion has its sweetness for the fallen.

A fox, pursued by the hounds, once turned aside as it fled for its life, to seize a barn-door fowl by the throat:—the hunted human creature, with the baying of the law behind it, will also pause in its flight to enjoy the sweet sense of power that lies in the action of slaughter.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE den above that which the woman Léroux tenanted in this hive of criminality—honeycombed with innumerable cells, that were filled with wretched famished idleness, or with the industry that only labors for guilty ends—was occupied by an old, feeble, sickly man, who was by trade a forger of false coin. He was a timid creature, who trembled if a leaf blew against him; he scarcely dared to pass his portion of the base money that he had worked; and he was very poor and miserable.

It had not always been thus with him: there had been a time when he had been a dramatic author and musical composer of no mean merit; when he had heard the sweet music of public applause; when the fair eyes of actresses had smiled on him; when his little, slight, airy, fantastic pieces, full of a sparkling mirth, which passed as wit, had been very popular in Paris.

There had been a time when the world had held for him pleasure, and love, and ease, and years of bright

folly, and childlike glee, and ignorant extravagance; and, in a certain sense also, the charmed delusions of fame.

But then, on that time had followed another, when the tastes of the volatile public altered: when the weather-cock of popularity no longer pointed his way; when the same audience that had applauded with so much enthusiasm, hissed with equal acerbity; not because there was change or was fault in the thing that he gave them, but because they had tired of it themselves.

And then he, being weak and heart-broken, and ill made to do combat with the stern foes of censure and ridicule, of bankruptcy and ruin, had succumbed to his fate, and had sunk gradually down, step by step, into wretchedness, and at length into crime.

He never ceased to abhor the evil ways to which he had yoked himself, the evil comrade-ship to which he had become bound. He was never anything save a pitiful, trembling, faint-hearted servitor of sin. He had been harmless, generous, and of innocent though inordinate vanity, in the season of his successes; he was scarcely more harmful now, though the degradations of poverty had driven him into the acceptation of crime. For the rest, the world had forgotten even his name; none remembered it, save when some restless young tyro of the theaters turned over a repertory of old theatrical pieces; and he would have killed himself if he had only had the courage to inflict the one final, unknown, dreaded pang.

As he sat now, huddled on his bed of straw, and shivering, though the evening was sultry and full of storm, he heard the voices below him. A rat had gnawed a hole through one of the beams of the floor; and through the chink the sounds ascended distinctly to his ear. An instinct, that was the remnant of his earlier and higher life, moved him to plug the hole, and shut out the sounds; but as he was about to thrust a piece of wood in it, a word caught his ear that made him pause, and listen eagerly. The word was Coriolis.

He had been at the height of his own renown when the yellow-haired mistress of the singer Gérant had first ared to the world of Paris. Her first effort had been

made in one of his own slender, graceful, burlesqued comic operas. He remembered the night so well. He had the name of Coriolis interwoven with all his sweetest successes; and in a fond feeble fashion he had loved this gay creature from the far southern sea-shore, who had mocked him, dazzled him, and made him ridiculous in her boudoir, but who, on the stage, had conceived and represented to such perfection his own fancies. In his way he had a tenderness for her yet; though she still basked in the sunlight, and he had sunk into nethermost darkness.

Moreover, a few years earlier, ere he had lent himself to the forgeries which now made him fearful of venturing out in the daylight, he had timidly stolen to her one day, as she loitered in her villa gardens, and recalled himself to her recollection, and begged alms of her, weeping piteously at his own abasement as he did so.

Coriolis, who would be very generous with gold not her own, and liked to play patronage, had been good to him, and given him the contents of her purse, and sent her servants to him with choice meats and wines; and he had never forgotten these gifts. He had never gone to her again, for some touch in him of his better life had made him shrink from trading on a liberality that had so willingly befriended him. But he had never forgotten. Therefore he listened eagerly, setting his eyes also to the rat-hole, and peering down into the den below.

He recognized Tricotrin; and he heard all that was spoken.

And he remembered, as he heard, one night in the autumn of a year that had long died out from his memory,—one night, when he had been full as poor, but not as criminal as he had now become, and could move as he chose among his fellow-men at liberty, and had joined the throng of a Café Chantant; all the old inborn love of melody that he possessed urging him to spend one of his few copper-pieces on the hearing of song. Now, his own music had almost, by that time, ceased to be heard in Paris; it had not possessed the strength that lives; it had caught the crowds for awhile, but had speedily died off their lips and their ears. Still, here and there a

chorus, a burden, a snatch of its tones, was sung by many who were ignorant of their author; and this night they had been sung at the café.

He had listened to them with the tears hot in his eyes; and at the light, buoyant mirth of their melodies, he had seen a child near him laugh, and clap her hands, and move with delight and ecstatic sympathy.

She had recalled to him the many faces that he had once seen reflect his harmonies thus. He had turned to her as it ended, and asked her, gently, "This pleases you?" She had answered, "Oh, yes! I never heard lovelier music!" and he had felt grateful to her. The people had begun hissing the song as old; and clamoring for a new favorite.

He had noticed the child, and the man who had been with her. The man he knew by sight as a friend of the artists, a peripatetic of the boulevards, an idol of the people; and he had asked who the young girl was that was with him. "Oh, that is only Tricotrin's Waif," had answered the painter whom he had questioned. "A foundling, I think they say;—his daughter most likely."

The memory of that night came back to him as he leaned over the rat-chink, watching and listening. With the subtle penetration which the suspicions and the expedients of his present mode of life had developed in him, he connected his remembrance of the girl who had then listened to his music, with the inquiries which he now heard asked.

"That Waif of his was the child of Coriolis," he said to himself, where he cowered on the floor. "Else why should he ask this of Léroux now? She is well in the world—that is all he will tell to this woman. It is well with her; she lives in happiness then, in greatness even, perhaps, who can say? Would Coriolis feel aught at that?—aught of regret or rejoicing?—if she knew?"

The sound of Tricotrin's footfall as it passed away down the crazy stair; the sound of the woman voice as it raised a tempest of oaths in fierce feud with her neighbor; the sound of the sullen heat-drops of the coming tempest beating on the broken roof; the sound of a young child's shrieks as some one beat it with furious blows in

the court below;—all these came on his ear where he sat by the rat-hole, huddled in his rags, and thinking.

"Would it be any service to tell her that her child lives?" was the thought which revolved to and fro in his feeble, tired, vacillating mind. And the hunger of his body, and the extreme wretchedness of his estate, made a baser, meaner, lower thought, from whose coarseness and selfishness he shrank, intrude itself, and twine in with the first.

It was:—telling her, would he be likely, or unlikely, to receive some gratitude, some gift, some plate of food, some coin of gold?

CHAPTER LXVIII.

A MYRIAD of lights were glittering under the trees and upon the waters, in the place where the sailor of Riviera had fled, as from a devil, from the face of the woman who had dishonored him.

Gilded gondolas and boats, like many-colored shells, floated over the little lake. Lanterns of every hue glowed and beamed under the branches, and at the prows of the miniature vessels. Music, and laughter, and song, and the murmur of the cascade crossed each other on the stilly night air. The roll of carriages sounded ceaselessly through the darkness of the avenues beyond. In the houses on the lake there were crowds of gay idlers, and of women in their richest appareling, jesting, eating, making love, in the coarse and witless fashions of modern dissipation. There were color, blaze, luxury, extravagance, pleasure, everywhere; even amid the deep, green, quiet woods, where ever and anon there broke the chorus of a song, or there flashed the sparkle of a lamp, or there glistened in a break of moonlight the hues of a woman's robes.

In one of those little caïques, with Chinese lanterns suspended at its prow, was a woman who leaned over

the cushions of the boat's side, as she had leaned over the balcony of her mansion to watch the passage of the swans.

A glitter of green and silver enfolded her; there were huge gold serpents coils upon her arms; there was a voluptuous bloom of art, delicate as any sea-shell's, upon her face: she was smiling and listening to a lover, in whose hand the oar rested idly. And she was pondering how little or how much he would be likely to pour into the bottomless pit of her debts; and thinking of the flavors of new sauces, and of the strange old wine a prince had sent to her; and of an oriental burnous, all interwoven with pearls and turquoises, that an oriental ambassador had given her at her asking; and of a torch-lit fete wherewith she had astonished the eyes of nobles at her villa the night previous.

For these were the things for which she had fled from Brino: these were the things that to her made the paradise of life: these were the things which to her filled the whole soul and sense of a woman with never-ending, ever-renewing delight.

To Ninette, the gardener's wife, it was the fatness of fowls, the plenteousness of bread, the ripe abundance of plums and of gourds, the presence of many gold pieces in the earthen pot buried under the apple-tree, that made the measure of life's perfect peace. To Coriolis, the actress, it was the worth of the emeralds on her arms, the cost of the yellow wines in her ice-pails, the gigantic size of the mirrors in her supper-room, the weight and worth of her lovers' ability to bear her share in their fortunes. To Madame de Lira, the Duchess, it was the magnitude of her proud estate, the supremacy of her power at the courts of the nations; the perfection of her diamonds, of her lace, of her horses, of her palaces; the extent of her subjugation of all the coldest and haughtiest that came near her sway.

But it was the objects alone that differed; the passion in all was the same; the one dominant feminine passion to possess, to surpass, to be rich in the possessions of life, to be content with the sweetness of the senses. The passions that kill their own souls, and make them kill

the souls of their lovers and of their children—strangling them with a noose of satin, stifling them on a bed of roses.

The boat glided across the lake that is in summer so gay with its plaything freight, and in winter so gay with the evolutions of silver-heeled skaters; the spherical Chinese lanterns glowed rosily through the gloom; the answering laughter of challenged friends came mirthfully across the water from other lamp-lit vessels; the little skiff came lightly to the shore, touched by acacia-branches. She threw aside her green and silver covering, and stepped with careless feet on to the land, and went up, still with laughter, and love-words, and malicious jests, all intermingled, to their midnight dinner at the house beneath the trees.

There were crowds of guests, of equipages, of men and women sauntering to and fro. It was midsummer; the theaters were about to close; foreigners formed the chief part of the throng; but there were still thousands who thought nothing so well became those balmy night-hours under the blue starry skies, in the full beauty and fragrance of the year, as colored lanterns, and brandy, and high-seasoned dishes, and loud laughter, and music taken from the Taverns, and women begotten on the Walpurgis-Nacht.

Out of the gay, amorous, motley crowd, a young man glided, and came to the side of Coriolis, and murmured in her ear.

She left her own group, and went with him up the staircase and into a little chamber looking on the wooden balcony of the house: a chamber all gilding, and mirror, and velvet, and color, filled with the scent of burning perfumes.

She cast herself down on one of the couches, and folded her hands on its carved back, and looked up with her blue innocent eyes.

"What is it?" she asked.

There had been love once betwixt this man and woman: "love," as in lack of better language that is called which is, on the one side, a youth's ambition to be named in the mouths of gossipers with one of the loveliest and

most notorious women of her day; and is, on the other, an adventuress's amusement in entangling and despoiling the boy who is, for the hour, as a gold-mine to her pillaging hands. There had been this love betwixt them; but, when its season had passed, there had come neither alienation nor distrust.

Neither had, in love, ever believed the other; but each had served the other, love having passed, with as much sincerity as was possible to their natures. He had been, indeed, a child in years to her, but she had found him no child in subtlety. She had seen that it was best to be well with him, a pretty snake, that had learned how to sting mortally ere he had reached maturity. He had seen that this woman, without principle, or conscience, or weakness of any sort, save the weakness of her own vanity, could serve him in fashions wherein he often needed service. They had been friends ever, in that unacknowledged bondage to each other which the knowledge of mutual sin and mutual use makes binding and inviolate on those who smile at oaths and laugh at loyalty.

Leaning against the window, he answered her now:

"You know the Duchess de Lirà?"

A steel-like glitter came into the blue serenity of her watching eyes.

"By sight—yes."

"My good Coriolis!—you only can know duchesses by sight. The gulf is so wide betwixt your practices and theirs! You seem to hate her by that look; do you, and, if so, why?"

"I hate them all?—why!—pooh! how can I tell? I hate them—just as cats hate dogs—so! The dog goes grandly past as if no cats were in existence,—well! the cat spits and scratches just to show it is not safe to ignore her, even though he may be a dog, legally registered and honored by men, while she is down in the law as vermin, and can only mouse for a living!"

"You are very candid."

Coriolis laughed again, her rich, light-hearted, contemptuous laughter.

"I always am. I do not mind being a cat at all; it is

generally well with cats. They get the cream, and the butter, and the warm fire, and the soft cushions, if they get them surreptitiously; now your dog,—if it be legalized, it is taxed and muzzled, and if it have a place in the laws, it has seldom bones in its platter! As for the 'grandes dames'—pshaw! they are only copies of us; they copy our slang, our costume, our manners, every one of our amusements! One always scorns a *replica!* And now and then they give one a look—ah!—a look in the passages of the opera, in the crowd of the carriage-drive, the dog's look at the cat, see you; and then one could kill them! As for this de Lirà—this daintiest of duchesses!—I have hated her ever since she was first pointed out to me years ago at the theater. She looks so insolent, so cold, so arrogantly well-content! The other day a rose fell from my balcony into her carriage—ouf! she cast it from her as though it were plague-stricken! She shall eat of that rose someway ere long; and it shall be death to her!"

A look of cruel meaning passed over the mirthful clear radiance of her seraphic face, changing all its happy indifference, its sea-shell bloom. It was scarcely ever that this bitter passion disturbed the easy sunny temperament natural to her, but she had the feline instincts in her. She could resent, and wait, and deal her vengeance with sure aim.

He smiled.

"You have studied this duchess well, it would seem," he said to her. "Do you see no likeness in her?"

"No."

She saw none; she was not swift to combine indications; and she had that curious torpor of the imaginative powers which appears so often to characterize those whose career lies in the embodiment on the stage of the imaginations of others.

"Think twice," he urged, softly.

She obeyed him, ruffling her pretty yellow hair as her habit was in the torment of thought, and beating restlessly with her fan on the gilded wood of her sofa. She did not see, she did not guess; the resemblance which had sufficed for the coarse hatred of the dairywoman, and

for the subtle intuition of the Athenian, escaped her. Coriolis had lived without thought, and she had little power of mental conception.

"Think twice," he urged, once more, "of a stray bird that once escaped you and me!"

She started.

"What! what! The child Viva!"

"Yes—the child Viva!"

"It is impossible! This woman is an aristocrat by birth!——"

"By marriage only. The duchess who cast out your rose from her carriage is the foundling who befooled and escaped us both at once."

Coriolis gazed at him with utter unbelief.

"It is impossible," she cried, afresh; "she came from north Europe, the daughter of noble people. She was an orphan in her infancy, and was adopted by their friend, the old dead duchess—so the story runs, as I have heard; and that man—half-fool, half-hermit—married her——"

"Oh, yes, he married her. I do not deny that. She is all that he could make her, and—she has forgotten that she was ever anything else. Nevertheless, it is true. This magnificent Cleopatra is the young fool that fooled us. How have I learned this?—never mind how, at first. When I saw her, I knew her; just one look on the stairs, and I read her face, and she mine. We have met with courtesy, parted with compliment; my lady is almost as fine an actress as you! But I know, and she knows that I know. Do you think she has slept in peace one hour since? I do not!

"I should have only suspicion in the stead of certainty, save for one false step of hers. It is this. It seems a year since she dismissed a steward of her late lord's from his rule at Lirà. He had been trusted, respected, well treated by the family for near thirty years, but—he displeased miladi. These hereditary sovereigns are so used to implicit submission, they cannot brook disobedience! He differed with her, and neglected a command; she gave him his dismissal—carelessly, as she would have brushed off a fly!

"The old man took it ill. But fair spoiled women

never heed how they make such an enemy. People I have, who are skillful, told me this when I bade them gather all histories of miladi's victorious reign. The old man dwells now in Paris with his son, a jeweler. I have seen him. You can believe how little love he bears to this new mistress, who banished him from a thirty years' well-feathered nest because he combated one out of her thousand caprices.

"With some persuasion, and some payment, I got the truth from him. He told me, when I asked him straightly if it were not so, that she was what I thought. There had been only three persons of the whole Lirà household who had known whence she came—himself, his wife, and one of their sons, who was chasseur to the duchess. All three were devoted to their master, and would have perished rather than have displeased or babbled of him. The wife and son both died some years since; the old man only lived, to be subject to all the vagaries of his new mistress's will. She dismissed him; and the thorn rankled in him. Miladi was wise when she turned him away; those servile worms never turn! Well!—you see I speak on no fancy; I tell you a fact. This woman who gives you a 'dog's look' on the opera-stairs, this great lady who flings your rose into the dust, this duchess who goes to stare at you as a spectacle, is Tricotrin's Waif and Stray—is the baby Viva, who has proved herself wittier, wiser, keener in the strife of life than you!"

Coriolis heard him, breathless, and with her hands tight clinched. The treacherous, murderous glitter in her forget-me-not-hued eyes grew colder and more brilliant; the soft curves of her mouth straightened and grew hard; the laughter on her lips was merciless. Scathing, mocking words of hatred rushed to her utterance. It was bitter as gall to her—this thing that he told.

That child who had once gazed at her with such rapt admiration, that little bohemian in her red gipsy hood, that nameless creature that she had played with, and dressed up, and tossed sweetmeats to, in careless patronage, that young fool who had fallen so readily into her nets, and who had worshiped her as some divine being, was now this haughty woman, this superb patrician, this

leader of fashion, who gave her the glances that kill, who swept past her as though naught of the same humanity could be in them!

"What—what!" she cried, aloud, while her sweet silvery voice became harsh and dissonant. "What!—that beggar-child a great duchess? that thing of hazard a court beauty? that golden-curled bastard a lawgiver of fashion? It is not true—it cannot be true. It is ridiculous to talk of rank in the same breath with her! What! a creature that a vagabond picked up on the highway, lifted on high like this? A baby that should have gone to the foundling houses, to the public charities, a Duchess de Lirà?—a little wretch that should have been reared in the hospitals and made into a sempstress, a fruit-seller, a flower-girl at the best, turned into a millionnaire, a lady-of-honor, a glittering princess like this! Pshaw! you talk fables. We are not in fairy-land, to see such transformations!"

He smiled, and waited in patience till the tempest had spent itself.

"Am I like one who speaks idly?" he said, at length. "No: what I say now is true. It is the same face; only, what was Gretchen then, is Cleopatra now. That is all. Transformation! Is there any transmuter like the magicians of wealth and ambition? Down at Villiers, a woman—stupid, heavy, and coarse as any one of the cattle she tends—knew her; knew the features that failed to tell you their story. If I had no proof, I should not be less sure of the past that belongs to her. It is true, however much you may doubt it. And I fail to see why you should doubt. Is the story of a man's infatuation, of a girl's ascendency, so rare? She had beauty, pride, tact, ambition,—these have kept her feet sure on the giddiest heights."

"But a duchess!—a duchess! It is ridiculous—incredible—intolerable!" she muttered, with something of that childish petulance with which she ever opposed what displeased her, deepened by an acrid envy and hate against this life that had once been in her hands like a fluttering, unfledged, caught bird, and now had soared to such vast heights above her. "A duchess!—that little, friendless, vanity-eaten, ignorant, superstitious, insensate fool, who

adored me first as an angel of light, and then thought me a fiend out of hell! What! You tell me that imperial woman, who carries her head like a stag, and has a glance like an eagle's; that woman who sits at the opera covered with jewels like an empress out of the old world of fable; that woman who has every man who looks on her, her lover; and has palaces, and castles, and lands, and all that her soul can desire—is the child that I robed in my laces, that you sought as your mistress, that lived in an attic with a republican vagabond, that asked no better of heaven than to tread in my steps!"

And she laughed aloud, her eyes shining like the steel of a sword.

She no longer disbelieved, though disbelief was on her lips.

She had ever hated the child who had been tempted by her, with the hate that the wrong-doer ever bears to the wronged; hated her, if only for the sudden force, and loathing, and perception of her own evil life, that had broken in upon Viva at the last hour of her temptation, and released her from the fatal bewitchment of her sorceress.

Coriolis had supposed that swift punishment in the shape of poverty, and privacy, and hardship, and heart-sickness had overtaken the venturesome creature that had dared to defy and resist her. She had supposed so—whenever she had given thought to the matter: and it was like iron in her soul to believe that in the stead of these, all gracious things, and all proud glories, had fallen to the lot of this life in whose pollution and betrayal she once had failed.

"I tell you this," he said, slowly, in answer. "Do you imagine it is so welcome to me that I should dream it out of pure desire for her good?"

"You told me she was dead," she said, with a certain ferocity that crossed strangely the soft and even tranquillity of his own tones.

"I told you as I believed: they said so about Villiers; it was the popular belief in all the southern country of the Loire. It was certain, too, that she had disappeared from her home, and was no more seen by the side of that

man, Tricotrin. I did not doubt what I heard; moreover, I was scarcely in the country—I lived chiefly at the Austrian court—I was soon consoled. I soon forgot her existence, although I did not forget——"

"That you would have your vengeance one day on the man, if the girl had perished," said Coriolis, with a certain impatience of his discourse. "No! we forget to love very rapidly: but I doubt if we ever forget to hate as long as there is any breath in us! Then you believe that when she fled from us, and disappeared from her garret, she went in all honor to those Lirà?"

"I do not believe. I know," he made answer: and recounted to her all that the steward had told him, which was a simple history enough, and essentially truthful.

Coriolis heard him, still impatiently; beating her fan upon the gilding, loosening and tightening the gold coils on her wrists, leaning restlessly out over the wooden rail of the gallery, and breaking off the white clematis buds and throwing them out into the moonlit shadowy gulf below.

She could doubt no longer: and where the rays of a lamp from above caught her face, and made bright the gleam of the eyes and the smile, both were cruel as men never are cruel—cruel with the cold, slow, wakeful, deathless, unsparing hate of a woman.

For some moments when he had ceased to speak she was silent; only the rapid working of her hand, as it tore up the stars of the clematis, and scattered them out on to the darkness, told the fret and the rage of her soul.

Suddenly she flashed her glance on him.

"Look you!" she said, between her set teeth, with a violence he had never seen wake from under her sunny indifference. "I might have been greater than she, once. Anatôle was all mine; a fool who adored me, and who was in my power, and who would have wedded me, all prince though he was, because I know so much,—so much that he feared the world ever should know! And I lost all *that* because I was the wife of the madman who died at my feet,—on my stage,—this winter-time only, while this duchess of yours sat on high and looked on! I had as much beauty as she,—ah, God, there was no-

thing on earth so fair as I was!—I had in me the blood of the noblesse; I had the skill that holds a populace spell-bound; I had the charm that drives men to madness. And yet this bastard, found stray in a thicket, is throned in honor because she had the wit to be earlier faithless than I!—this nameless thing who was reared on the bread of an old peasant's alms passes me by in the passages of the opera-house with the cold calm of the aristocrat who does not even deign to perceive that such women as I are near, though the same hands make our robes, the same workers fashion our jewels, the same purses feed our fancies, the same lips caress our cheeks!"

In the passionate utterance of the words, Coriolis was transformed; she was for one solitary moment of her actual life possessed and moved by the emotions which she so long had counterfeited on the stage.

Her eye gleamed, her mouth trembled, her voice rang, under the inspiration of hatred, and envy, and of a vague shame that fought against her life-long repulsion of it; some feeling wakened in this careless, callous, mindless thing, some inarticulate pain stirred in her and found voice.

It was low, it was venomous, it was born of envy, and bitterness, and many an evil thing; but it was pain,—the first that Coriolis had ever known, save that which had dully smote her conscience on the night when a dead sailor lay in the house by the theater with a knot of sea-grasses and a woman's azure ribbon on his breast.

He who heard her now had perception of this; but no pity. He mused how best this would further his own desires.

"Well," he said, slowly; "well—if you have this against her, you can repay it now."

"How so?" she muttered, restlessly, breaking down the clematis flowers. "How can that ever be? She is what she is by law, you say; how can one touch her, or despoil her, or hurl her down?"

He leaned over the wooden railing by her side, and looked down into the gray soft night shadow broken with gleams of color and rays of light where the people moved below.

"You can do none of these; true. Her possessions, her titles, her dignities she must keep all her life through. But you can do almost as much as though you stripped her of these; you can make her subject to the world's contempt. You can fling her story to the hounds of slander, you can give all the women whom she has rivaled a poisoned dagger against her; you can leave her in solitude among her splendor."

Coriolis gave a fierce gesture of denial.

"If we leave her her riches and her titles, we leave her a herd of lovers, a crowd of friends! Does the world ever forsake what can feast it?"

"That is true. Nevertheless, you can deal her such bitterness that she will be lonelier in her eminence than any famished beggar that has ever asked her alms. She loves at last;—she is again about to wed:—one breath of disgrace cast on her, and the man she worships will let her die rather than ever trust her with his honor."

Coriolis looked quickly up: her eyes caught their look from him, her mouth laughed with ruthless joy, her breath came eagerly.

"Ah! that is well put. This man is——?"

"Estmere."

She laughed softly still, under her breath.

"I see! I see! How strange it is! Yet if he love her will he care? Men are such fools!"

"For her story? No. But for her shame he will leave her forever."

"Her shame! What is it?"

His smile was slow and very full of meaning, as he answered her.

"Forgive me; but—can we not say she was once beneath your roof? you see?"

She crushed a snowy cluster of the clematis blossom violently in her palm, and flung it forth into the gloom, and laughed still,—with her teeth hard set, and a warmth of sudden color on her face.

"I see," she murmured back to him. "Yes. It will serve—it will serve! She lies in the hollow of your hands; and—only the other day, I thought if I could see her mount the guillotine! For she threw my yellow rose in the dust—in the dust under her carriage-wheels!"

CHAPTER LXIX.

As the light silvery robes of Coriolis swept through her moonlit garden toward dawn, a frail tremulous creature, hiding beneath the myrtles and hydrangeas, stole forth and touched her timidly.

"Madelon—Madame—may I have one word with you?"

She turned and gazed at him in surprise. None save those who had known her in her earliest years ever called her by that name.

"It is you, Fleurus! Hiding there like a thief! What is it you want? money?"

He quivered a little. The time had been when his aid and his heart had been passionately craved by the young, unknown, ambitious mistress of the actor Gérant.

"I am no better than a thief," he whispered. "Still, I do not come for alms. I come to tell you something that may be of service. For the sake of the past——"

His voice broke down. That past was so sweet, so irrevocable, so utterly forgotten by the world! She smiled, and carelessly motioned him to follow her through the glass doors of a lighted chamber that looked on the gardens.

"Speak quickly," she said, casting herself on a couch. "I am tired, and it is almost daylight. I will do what I can for you—short of reviving your little operas!"

He winced under the contemptuous laugh. Those slight, airy, sparkling, world-forgotten pieces had been the stepping-stones to her fame!

"It is not that," he said, hurriedly. "It is—do you ever think of your child?"

Her eyes opened in amaze.

"What child?" she muttered.

"The child of Jean Bruno."

She started slightly, and her face clouded.

"Fool! what do you talk about?" she said, with impatient contempt. "A child dead a score years ago!"

"She is not dead——"

"She is. What are you driving at?—I do not understand—speak out plainly."

"I do. She never died. She lived to womanhood—she lives still——"

"That is folly! What impostor has cheated you into this nonsense? Why do you bring these stupid things up?—I hate them. They make me feel old!"

A certain sense of remorse stole on her. She had never thought of this child twenty times in as many years; but she thought of it now, as she had last looked on it, asleep in its boat-shaped cradle, with a plume of sea-weed in one hand, and its fair curls tumbled and tossed in the summer heat.

The wretched Fleurus was frightened; he had hoped to pleasure her.

"It is true, indeed," he murmured. "I thought you might wish to know. And all is so well with her, they say——"

"Who say?" she said, fiercely, for the bitter passions awakened in her that night were still in the ascendant. "You are a fool, and have been told some ludicrous lie to chicane you. Who has been talking to you of these by-gone things? Answer me!"

And he told her: omitting no word that he had heard by stealth in his garret at Chaumont. Coriolis listened, with a tempestuous shadow on her face, and her eyes by turns incredulous, contemptuous, startled, angered, and wondering. She felt neither joy nor sorrow; she was only moved by a restless sense of impatience against these things of her long-buried past, that would thus arise and pursue her, and force her to think, and remember, and, in a vague sense, to regret.

In a vain, gay, childish fashion she had been pleased with her infant's beauty. She had been amused to put its fair face and limbs in contrast with the brown sunburnt children of the neighboring cabins; she had been willing to toy with it, and be painted with it as Venus and Love, Mary and Christ, by traveling painters. But

in a sense, also, she had hated it as an emblem of her bondage, as a type of her obscurity, as a constant reminder of the passion of which she was so unutterably impatient. She had forsaken it willingly; she had never thought twice of its fate. She listened in indifference, touched with anger, and with scorn.

"So!" she said, with a laugh that was bitter; "the woman lied to Gérant, and Gérant lied to me, and the child was left to grow up a living lie—if your tale be true. Well! that is all very fitting as the world goes. She ought to have prospered. Where is she now?"

"Ah! that is more than I can tell. The man did not tell that to Léroux."

"But who is the man? You saw him?"

"Yes, I saw him. He is a bohemian. The people care for him. They call him Tricotrin."

"My God!"

The cry of habit broke from lips which ever mocked in their sport at all deity and all faith. She rose impetuously from her indolent rest; there was a look on her face that terrified the timid soul of the old dramatist.

"You lie!" she cried, with that ferocity which had only arisen in her that night, transforming all her soft, gay grace. "You lie! You are sent here to blind me with this story, to disarm me against her, to seal my lips as to her past! He has put his wretched stray thing on high among princes; and because I know and can ruin her, he sends you to baffle me, and unnerve me with this fable about Bruno's child. You are his tool—his mouthpiece—confess it! This is a wretched, senseless, baseless lie!——"

The old man quailed before her; bewildered and wholly ignorant of her meaning.

"As Heaven is my witness," he cried, desperately, "I tell you the simple truth. I have never spoken with him in all my life. And as for her—I know not what she is; whether princess or beggar. It seemed bitter to him; and only freshly learned by him. I tell you only that which I heard. Why do you doubt, only because I have said the man's name? You did not seem to doubt while I told you. You seemed to know that it was to the

woman Leroux that Gérant gave the child when you fled with him."

"Silence!" hissed Coriolis. "What if I knew—what if I knew? I thought the child dead. I believed the tale that they told me. Why have you stirred my belief? Why have you brought me this accursed truth now? Why have you not told me this thing either sooner or later? She—she—that woman who loathes me, that creature I hate, is the child that I bore, and suckled, and held to sleep in my bosom! The daughter of Bruno that cold empress, who passes me by in the height of a great lady's scorn! Ah, devil!—beast!—that you are to have told me! Out of my sight—out of my house! or I will give your body to the tribunals, and your soul to hell, if a hell there be! Off—do you hear me? My child—mine! Great Heaven, if only you had held your peace for one day later!"

The miserable Fleurus, gathering his rags about him, gazed at her trembling still, but with a dignity in his look, a passionless rebuke in his eyes.

"I might have known it," he said, slowly. "The woman who dishonors her husband, forsakes her lovers, and forgets her friends, can have nothing of womanhood left in her save its passions and its cruelties. I have told you the truth; seek Léroux if you doubt."

And without another word he turned and passed away.

When the morning came, a dead body was found floating in the river above Surennes, in which none of those who saw it recognized the man whose melodies once had echoed from all the laughing crowds of Paris.

Coriolis stood motionless where he had left her; she had no memory of him, she was paralyzed by the truth which had come to her from his lips. She strove to doubt, but she could not. Truth for once was stronger than this fair liar, whose art it had been through so many years to breathe life, and substance, and power, into the falsehoods of fictitious woes, fictitious joys, fictitious passions.

That vague horror which had moved her when her husband had fallen lifeless at her feet, returned on her now. She did not feel remorse, nor regret, nor yearning,

nor shame. But she felt fear,—a shapeless and nameless fear,—a fear of her own sins.

In her lighted chamber, in her festal robes, in all the gay costly glitter of her summer-night's appareling, she stood cold, numb, stricken—appalled by the specters of her past.

There was not in her tenderness, or pity, or repentance. There had been no place for them in the supreme egotisms of her youth; there could be no place for them in the seared sensualities of her maturity. She had never loved aught save herself. Husband, or lover, or child, had never been more to her than the flower worn in her bosom one day, to be tossed aside unremembered the next. She hated with deadliest hate the woman who had passed by her with that cold disdain, who had thrown her rose into the dust of the street with that gesture of loathing aversion:—hated her but the more because the tie of this close union was between them, because the blood of Bruno flushed those scornful lips, because those eyes that had swept over her in that chill scorn were eyes which once had smiled in hers the dreaming smile of infancy.

She hated her but the more; she had cried out in her fury against the accident which had revealed this truth to her ere her vengeance had struck its blow; she had no mercy in her heart, no yearning for the pardon of the creature she had wronged,—only hate, hate—the bitterness of hate, for the little child she had forsaken when it had been sleeping in the hot summer noon down by the southern shore, as for the superb patrician who had smitten her with the pang of dishonor by a look. Yet there was that in the horror of this,—their mutual fate,—which daunted and terrified even her hard, light, wanton nature. There was that in this destiny which brought her face to face with the guilt of her earliest youth, that froze the life even in this frivolous, inconsistent, mindless, merciless courtesan.

In this very chamber she had spread her nets for the unwariness of innocence, and tempted the guileless faith that saw in her such divinity, and sought to draw down to destruction this soilless life that had sprung from her

own, as the purity of the lotus springs from the corruption of the river.

She had been the temptress of her daughter's soul.

And there was that in the unnatural horror of her sin which overcame her, and was stronger than all her levity and all her wit, and cowed her with a ghastly sense of crime that made her crouch as beaten hounds crouch to the lash. She had no fear of chastisement, no fear of a future life, no fear of man or God; but this at length she feared,—the infamy of her past.

Suddenly she started, and looked up at a clock above her; it was not yet dawn.

"There may be time—it is a chance," she murmured, and she threw her cashmeres over her, and bade them bring forth her night-horses once more, and drive back whence she had come.

There was scarce a league betwixt her gardens and the park-gates of Boulogne. They took her swiftly as the winds. In the house by the lake there were still lights, and music, and noise, and carriages rolling away in the gray of the breaking morning. The last embers of its revelries still glowed.

She alighted and moved toward it, her eyes glancing hither and thither; a group of men and women, wild with hot wines and mad vice, reeled out in the soft shadows, chanting boisterously a chorus of a new opera: she saw among these rioters the one whom she needed, and went among them and drew him away. He was not drunk like his companions; he understood and obeyed her. He went passively where she led,—into solitude, under the trees by the lake. They were as utterly alone as though they had stood in the heart of a western forest. A wall of green enshrouded them, the still water lay at their feet; the only sound of the life that was around them was the sound of the rioters' chorus growing fainter as they passed farther away.

"What is it? Why are you come back?" he asked, hurriedly, noticing the strange colorless intensity upon this face that had never known grief, nor shade, nor thoughtfulness.

Her hands clinched on his arm.

"We must let her be!" she said, sullenly. "We must leave her to her honors and glories; we cannot touch her—we cannot."

He looked at her in amaze.

"And why not? A woman's vacillation in *you*?"

She laughed; and the laugh was as mirthless as the dreary dull mirth of the singers.

"We cannot!" she echoed; and there was an accent in the word that told him the renunciation was very bitter to her, wrung from some other power in her than her will or her pity. "We have wronged her enough—you and I. We must let her be."

He gazed at her, in incredulous scorn.

"Coriolis!—are you mad? An after-thought of remorse from *you!*"

"Pshaw!" she said, fiercely, in her shut teeth. "Remorse? Who talks of remorse? I am not a fool. There is nothing to repent of;—I have enjoyed, I have always enjoyed. I would not change any of it if I could. It has been sweet enough all these years. Remorse! you prate like a poet! There is none in *me*. But we must leave her alone, I tell you. Listen, listen:—she is the child of Bruno!"

"Of Bruno!"

He repeated the name without comprehension. In his world the past of Coriolis was scarcely known. She had abandoned some husband for Gérant; she had come from obscurity; she had been once the wife of the mad fisherman who had died on her stage; this he knew, but indifferently, and with indifference. What to him or the world was the early life of a woman who, having none who cared for her future, had none who asked of her past?

"Well! do you not know now?" she muttered through her teeth that were still shut. "I was his wife!——"

He started from her side as the light broke on him, and stood gazing at her by the clear rays of the morning stars. Cold and cruel though his nature was, it was a shock that went home to him.

"*You* are her mother!" he said, breathlessly, while his voice was drowned in the drunken song of the

revelers that came to them through the depth of the trees.

She laughed, that laugh which made even him shrink and feel a sense of fear. Not because there was in it any great grief, or any sort of despair,—these were not possible to her,—but because it was so utterly without these; so entirely the laugh that rang over her wine, her wit, her lovers' flatteries.

"Her mother—yes! It makes one feel old. That sea-cabin down in the south, so dark, and narrow, and wretched,—ah! it was all very well for an actress's nest, you think, but unfit for the birthplace of that great duchess! I can smell its salt scent; I can see its nets and its creels; I can remember its steep leaning roof, and its path cut in the rock, and the eternal sough of the waves down below. Ah, God, how I hated them all! He was her father—Bruno. She has his great, dark, dreaming eyes. I ought to have known them when they looked at me first!——"

"But—great Heaven!—how have you learned this? I cannot comprehend——"

She told him. He heard in silence, as she had listened to Fleurus.

"There is no doubt, then!" he said, at length, with lingering doubt in his accent.

"No doubt!" she said, as she stood looking straight at the still starlit water, with that curious look of scorn and of pain, of passion and of levity, on her face. "It is the daughter of Bruno that gave me that look in the opera! Things are strange? When I first saw her face in the gray dawn, on the day of her birth, I did not think;—pshaw! if women ever did think of their children's future, they would strangle them the same hour that they are born! I left her—oh, yes! She was his child, and I was so weary of him! So it comes back, you see—things do. I do not hate her less; I think I hate her more. She is on such heights; she is so cold, so proud, so pure, so great—and she shudders when a rose that has touched my hand touches hers!"

When she had sunk down on a bench by the lake, she gazed fixedly at the gleam on the water; forgetful of her

companion. Some sense of the dreary unnatural horror of this destiny that had thus enfolded these women held him silent.

The chorus of the rioters had ended, the lights were out in the pleasure-places, there was no sound save the sighing of the trees, the trembling of the wind upon the water.

"I hate her more," she muttered. "That creature is mine, and yet scorns *me!* I hate her more. But I cannot hurt her. I dare not. She must never know what I know—never. She was in the theater that night when he died; she was laughing, and covered with diamonds. God! how strangely things work!"

Her voice fell again; he said nothing. A sense of terror oppressed him at the ghastly fate which thus had brought, in her utter unconsciousness, the daughter of both to be witness of the death of the one, of the shame of the other; yet a sense of exultation moved him also at the added vengeance given to his hands.

"You will keep this secret?" she said, fiercely, as she suddenly looked up. "I have many of yours in my keeping! Answer me: you will leave her in peace—now?"

He made no answer.

"You will leave her in peace?" she said, again. "We owe her that—you and I. How we strove to net her, and chain her, and drag her down to our depths! And she was mine all that while! Is there really a devil, I wonder? You will let her be—now? Answer me—you will let her be?"

The slow, soft smile she knew so well stole over his face.

"Coriolis:—if you have your daughter's honor to keep, I have my father's honor to save."

And almost ere the words were breathed, he had glided quickly from her, and was lost in the blackness of the woods.

She did not stir, she did not cry out; she sat still, with a scared look in her eyes. For the first time in all her many seasons of success, she had been deceived. Her secret was his, to deal with as he would. She had only brought to his hand the poison wherewith he could

make mortal the dagger-thrust he already was free to deal!

"Oh, fool—fool—fool!" she said in her soul. "When did you ever know him spare!"

An hour earlier, she had mourned that her vengeance was stricken from her grasp; now a sickly horror of what she had done possessed her. Husband and child—had she not wronged these both enough already?

The gloom of the trees inclosed her; the wind sighed wearily over the water; the stars faded, and the dawn came. When the morning broke, Coriolis still sat there, with her eyes still fastened on the stillness of the pool, and the red flush from the east tinging as with blood the opals in her bosom.

She had not remorse; she had not pity; she had not grief; but she had fear—fear of the dead sins of her dead years, that broke from their graves, and came and faced her here.

CHAPTER LXX.

THAT night there were tumult and tempest in Paris. Though the jests passed, and the jewels glittered, and the buffoonery rioted, and the equipages rolled in all her light places of pleasure, none the less in the dark lairs of want, and of woe, of restless thought, and of fretting passions, was the lust of revolution making keen the eyes of men, and heating their blood as flame.

Children glowing with the stories of Hellas; youths burning with youth's noble madness; men lashed to fury and blindness by some friend or some brother's prison-agonies; students sick with the dire disease of the old world's endless corruption; these again, as times countless before, were eating their hearts out in weariness, and feeling helplessly in the darkness for truth, and counting no possible wrong in the future could be so great as the wrong of the present, and willing to cast their lives in the dust under the wheels of the cannon, if only from out

of their death deliverance for their people might come. And again, as times countless before, these—the world's divine madmen—were foiled, and spurred on, and beguiled, by the brutes of sleek tongue and strong sinew, who desired to light the torches of freedom, only that they might toss them into the stores of the rich, and who crazed with their lips for the seizure of tyrants because in their hearts they were thirsting for the seizure of treasuries and granaries.

It was the story, so old and so weary; the story that would break the strength and the spirits of men if they paused too long to muse over it; the story of high thoughts, and pure dreams, and impossible hopes, fused in with base greed, and base cant, and base envy; the story of idealic ambitions, soilless as snow on the mountains, finding no better comrade and issue than the charlatan's screech to the mob, and the demagogue's rage against power. The eternal story, without an end—young as the days of Mentana, old as the Hellenic ages.

"There will be work to-morrow," said Mi Minoux, showing his great wolfish teeth with a laugh of grim joy, as he passed down, through the evening shadows, from the den where Rose Léroux dwelt.

"Work?" Tricotrin echoed, wearily, not thinking at that hour of his meaning.

The Patron touched the knife that hung at his waistband.

"They say the students are rising!" he said, with indifference as to who might hear; in his own kingdom he was above the law. "They will be shot down, of course. The government is strong, and they are fools; but while they are up, it is high jinks for us. We have always a good time of it. For my part, I wish they would have a game of barricades every week."

And he drew his hand across his throat with a significant gesture; he had drawn it across other throats than those of lambs

"It will be an affair of children," continued Mi Minoux, his tongue still loosened by the lasting fumes of the alcohol. "Nothing else. They are wild because their darling has been arrested for that demonstration at the Lycée.

They are fools! The government knows of this—oh, yes—but it lets them go on a little while. They will rise, and they will arm, and they will sing the Marseillaise—all very fine for a few hours,—and then—ponz! the cannon will clear the streets of them. It is always so. And meantime we—we shall plunder the houses! Oh, I like that trade of yours, Tricotrin—what you call it—patriotism? It is very much like ours—when everything is said. They work together amazingly well!"

Tricotrin made him no answer; his heart was heavy with a bitter sense of utter weakness against the mailed might of circumstance, the merciless cruelties of chance.

He knew well that the rough reasoning of Mi Minoux had its germ of a terrible truth in it; he knew well that the coarse wisdom of the law-breaker foresaw the sure issue of the unequal conflict with which the time was pregnant. But he heard only dully; he had not the strength left in him to reply.

The dead weight of his own pain numbed in him all other sorrow for all other things. The power of sympathy was numbed in him by the deadness of hopeless regret. The impersonal was for once killed in him by the force of the personal; as it is oftentimes killed, from birth till death, in many lives.

He gave the Patron a brief good night, and went down through the long steep road that led back into Paris. Evening had just fallen, and the first drops of the coming rainstorm, the first sullen roll of the thunder, gave their warning of the tempest that was gathering slowly in the west. It might break that night, it might drift away for a brief season and leave the skies in semblance clear again; but it was in the atmosphere—hot, sickly, terrible; making the air troubled, and the wind winged with pestilence, keeping the parched earth waiting like a captive bound and athirst.

As he passed through the quarter, the people stood in groups before the doors of their wretched dwellings. The women, ragged and filthy, leaned out of their windows with their eyes gleaming in exultation from under their shaggy brows. Here and there, one had twisted up her unkempt hair under a red kerchief; here and there, one

shrieked fierce, foul invective against the decent and the rich. In general they were very quiet, and had the still, dogged, watchful look of those who pant for action but wait perforce for a word of command.

They were the terrible daughters of terrible mothers,—offspring of those women who once rose at the beat of the drum in the quarter of St. Eustache, and poured out down the roads of Versailles, till even in the voice of the lion there was fear as Mirabeau muttered—"Paris marche sur nous."

He never looked up at them; he never noted them, as he passed through their streets and their lanes. His head was sunk, his eyes saw nothing; his thoughts were filled only with this lineage of evil, this heritage of shame, that were all the birthright of that proud, scornful, fearless life which believed that it had sprung from the purple bed of a Porphyrogenitus.

One of them placed herself in his path, a woman of thirty years, with a head fit for Pallas Athene, and a body strong and sinewy as the frame of a cart mare, with her bosom bare, and her arms akimbo, and her garments all in rags.

"Tricotrin!" she cried. "What ails you?"

He started, and gazed at her like one awakened from a trance.

"Your own malady—unrest," he answered, curtly, and strove to pass her. But she would not let him go.

"Tricotrin!" she muttered, with her lips close to his ear as she reached up to whisper, "you know?—you know?"

"Yes. I know."

He knew that she spoke of the insurrection seething in embryo in the minds of many.

"And you are with us as of old?"

"I can never be against you."

"But you will not take leadership, they say?"

"No. I will not. Not to lead children into a pit of hell-fire. But why are you in it—you,—a woman?"

Her eyes glowed like those of a lioness.

"Women have made many revolutions!"

"Ay; they have. Revolutions merciless, murderous,

narrowed to personal wrongs, mad with the rabies of hate, inspired by the lack of bread on their platters—revolutions that recoiled in the end on themselves; like all revolts on all women!"

Her dark face grew full of rage.

"Why should not women be patriots as well as men?" she muttered. "We can stab!"

"Ah, truly! And you never think that when the stab lets the life out of a tyrant, it gives him in return all the might of martyrdom. Women can be patriots?—yes. By other ways than the dagger. You are a patriot—you—Athénaïs Var?"

"To the death!"

Her black eyes flamed; her mouth set. She believed what she uttered; she was drunk with desire to be one with Corday and Théroigne in the memories of the people.

"That is well. And what is your calling?"

She flushed under her dark skin; her infamy was in rags, but it was the same that Coriolis covered with satins.

An infinite sadness, half pity, half scorn, wholly sorrow, was in his gaze as it dwelt on her.

"Ay! A patriot!—and your trade to lead your country's sons into evil! Can you give tyrants better mockery of patriotism than that? When women gather no more in the bagnios, and drink no more in the taverns, and flaunt no more in the ways of vice, and no more lure and lead the youths down into ruin, then will it be time for women to talk of politics and patriotism."

A strange emotion flitted over the woman's handsome face.

"Théroigne was vile," she muttered; "and she helped shatter the Bastile! That was something?"

"It was. But to purify and make honest her own life had been something also,—something greater and something harder. Having some germ of genius in her, she would do something—poor wretch! It was easy to inflame the mob; it would have been severe to bridle her license. So she rode astride of a cannon; and left all her vices to flourish. Do you the other way;—leave the cannon to soldiers; and go combat your passions. Be not a

coward who leaves the near duty, that is as cruel to grasp as a nettle; and flies to gather the far-off duty, that will flaunt in men's sight like a sunflower."

She looked at him with a look like the look of a dumb beast that is half savage, half timid, and hung her head.

"You are right," she said, sullenly, as she turned away. "Women are cowards; they are afraid to starve!"

He went onward, losing all thought of her as his memory drifted back to the fate of the creature he loved. Many strove to arrest him; but he waited with none any more. Yet he walked on without aim, without destination; walked on merely in that wanderer's impulse that was in him to find his way out into the open country, and to lose all pain in motion, and air, and the sweep of the winds, and the width of the heavens.

The streets were crowded. The lamps were hung for the festival of the morrow. The populace were taciturn, feverish, gloomy; watching the preparations with angry, sullen eyes. Every face wore a look of hushed, vague, unquiet expectation, save the faces of the indolent idlers, whose carriages swept in endless motion through the gaslit avenues. Every now and then, there passed some student, or artist, or workman, who wore in his shirt a spray of the gray lavender that was piled in such odorous heaps in the flower-markets:—it was the rallying sign of the morrow.

He went through them, on and on, noting nothing until, as he took his way without thought, he came close to two bronze gates set in a massive wall. He looked up, and shuddered. They were the gates of the great Lirà Palace.

There were many people about them, many laced liveries, many hurrying pages; and men were lighting the lamps that would make the frontage one blaze of light.

"Is your mistress in Paris?" he asked of one thus busied.

The man, garrulous and good-tempered, turned and laughed.

"She came an hour or two ago. It is her fête to-night to the princes. I thought every one knew that. Look at these lamps, three thousand of them. And each one

cost five francs a piece! Fine times, are they not?—for the lamp-makers!"

"Is she well?—your mistress?"

"Well? I suppose so. She can eat and drink silver and gold if she likes! I saw her go through to-day. She was very pale, now you speak of it. You know she is to wed with that foreign lord—what is it?—Estmere? So her women tell me. They say it is a love-marriage; that is rare among these people."

And he turned again to the lighting of his three thousand lamps.

Tricotrin went onward.

The lamplighter looked uneasily after him.

"Look you," he said to his comrade, "that man moves like a man I once saw struck by a bullet; he walked like that, with the ball in him; but twelve hours after he was dead."

CHAPTER LXXI.

"THE storm passed?" said the carver of ivory, standing out in the hot sulphur-scented night before his threshold.

Tricotrin glanced at the skies; they were starlit and very clear.

"For a season," he made answer. "It will be but the heavier when it falls."

The carver regarded him in anxiety.

"Is it true," he murmured; "true that the students to-morrow—— ?"

Tricotrin pointed to the skies.

"Who can say when the tempest may break? It is in the air. It may pass—it may come."

Clerot shuddered.

"Tempests kill?"

"Ay. They kill. But more mercifully than the corruption-born plagues that they sweep from the earth Is it worse with Jacques Bénoît?"

"It is worse. He sinks surely, and he is light in the head; he talks foolishness."

He asked no more; he went up the dim-stairway to the place where, high in air, pent among the peaked masked roofs, was the attic where the old man lay, slowly dying, and muttering foolishness,—of the old mill-stream, and the sweet pine-woods, and the shining yellow sands, of his birth-country. These were all that he saw now; though for sixty years he had stitched, and stitched, and stitched, till his eyes were blind, over the black foul-smelling leather in the garrets and workshops of Paris.

His mind was gone; but over his face glimmered a smile as he heard the voice of his only friend, and his withered hand crept feebly forth to meet a grasp that it could return but for a moment.

"Thou comest from Leuzarch," he muttered, thinking still of his birth-hamlet in the west. "Thou hast the scent of the pines, and the song of the lories, with thee——;" and with that he ceased his feverish babble, and was very still, with the smile yet about his mouth, and a curious, listening, happy brightness on his face.

Tricotrin watched by him through all the hours of the night;—a heap of straw his couch; the only light a wretched flame upon the hearth that warmed a little iron pot of soup for the sick man; above, in the sloped ceiling, the narrow space they called a lattice, through which the blue and starry skies gleamed curiously. By instinct—the instinct taught by many such vigils as this, which had been common in a life that men had deemed wholly of pleasure—he served all the few sad needs of this death-bed, whose disease was simply age. But, for himself, he had no other consciousness than that of the keen, hard agony within him, that still dulled all his senses to all other things.

To that little garret, so high in air, so far from the lighted streets, so near to the starry skies, there came no sound of traffic or of speech to call his thoughts to the ways and the wants of men. All the day, and the night preceding the day, he had spent among the attics, and the cellars, and the painting-rooms, and the secret haunts of Paris, arguing with those whose young souls were

set on impossible dreams, whose young lives were eager to be thrust forward to the slaughter. All the night and all the day, until he had heard the Greek's tale, he had bent all the strength, and the mind, and the suasion, and the genius in him, to hold back from their madness these children who dreamed of a millennium, and rushed on to the mouths of the cannon; who murmured of Harmodius and Aristogiton, and stumbled blindfold to the bench of the galleys.

But now,—where he sat in the narrow, dusky, moonlit garret, with no sound on the silence save the slow, gentle breathing of the old man, who had ceased to babble of the pine-wood and the lories, and who slept on his hard knotted bed as he had used to sleep in childhood on the moss under the firs,—he had forgotten these; he had forgotten the things that had been nearest and holiest to him through all the years of his life; he had forgotten all except the passion which consumed him.

When she had gone from him in her youth, his rivals had been riches, and vanities, and all the manifold temptations of the senses—rivals he had scorned while he had cursed them. But now—in her womanhood—his antagonist was that love which he had bade her follow; his spoiler was the man whom he had bade her honor.

All his life long no taint of greed had darkened his thoughts against the possessor of his heritage; no pang of grief had stirred in him for all that he had forfeited. When the calm wisdom of maturity had surveyed that rashness of boyish chivalry, no single desire, no solitary envy, had made him wish the past undone. There had been but one regret in him—the regret that with all the affluence and power which his act had conveyed away to Estmere, it had not been his also to give with them the four-leaved shamrock of perpetual joy.

The passage of the years—which kills all things—had never killed in him the tenderness of early memories, the nobility of early impulse. Envy had never touched him—can the king who voluntarily abdicates, envy the successor whom he has of his own will lifted to a throne, that he, himself, may roam the earth unchallenged, and live in the sweet peace of unwatched freedom?

It was only now,—now when the beauty of a woman was the thing of his desire—that he cried out against this fate which made the holder of his heritage, the owner of his treasures, lord even of this also.

Above the little casement, in the roof, the stars grew larger with the coming of the dawn; the flame of the cold hearth died down, and left but the gray sickly ashes there; the rats, growing bold in the silence, stole forth and rustled beneath the straw on which he sat. There was not even on the stillness the breathing of the old man in his slumber.

For, once, when he himself had arisen, and had gone to the pallet where the cobbler lay, he had listened and heard no sound, he had put his hand to the sleeper's lips and felt no warmth, he had looked closer by the clear light of the moon, and had seen that the deep tranquillity of death had stolen over the grim, dark, wasted, withered face, which had a smile upon it as though in his last hour he had heard the lories singing.

He had closed the lids softly over the old dim eyes that through the mists of dissolution had once more seen the purple hills and the wide woods of the country of their youth; and he had gently folded together on the breast the aged hardened hands that had worked on in ceaseless toil for the bare needs of life, but never had been outstretched for alms since their palms had been soft and rosy in an infant's years, catching in mirth against a mother's skirts. Then he had gone back to his place, beneath the roof-hole, where the stars shone through; and thus he still kept vigil there,—alone with the dead old man, and with the knowledge that was bitterness passing that of death.

He held in his hand the truth that would tear these lovers asunder.

But—to use it? He recoiled from the power as men recoil from thoughts of murder.

A season earlier, truly, he would have forbade her to enter the life of a man with any lie left in her own. When she had been his, he had not suffered her to go to her chosen future with one false thing to stain her innocence. By every law that binds the consciences of men, he knew

that to withhold her history from one who should stand to her in a husband's place was to do dishonor, treachery, and a craven wrong. He knew this;—a day sooner he would have forced its truth on her without mercy, and compelled her to obey its dictates. But now,—this severity of justice looked no better than the brutality of vengeance.

The stern simplicity of perfect truth which he had ever followed, as men lost at night upon the moorlands follow the polar star, was leading now to that way whereby the baser part of passion in him would be likewise obeyed; and he no longer dared to yield himself to its guidance, lest desire clothed itself in honor, and the longing of jealousy made itself look fair in the guise of duty.

He was even as the Syrian who beheld his single vineyard seized by the monarch in whose hands were all the breadth, and beauty, and plenteous increase of the land; and he had more than the Syrian's pain. For he had of his own will given the scepter from his hands, and of his own will descended to a wanderer's estate; and because it refused to bloom and ripen in the shade, he had turned his young vine toward that sun-glow which, gilding it, had drawn upon its luster and loveliness the robber's sight. He held in his hand, indeed, the power by which he could lay bare the canker at the root of this fair vine, and make it worthless in his spoiler's eyes, even as a plant poison-fed and breathing poison. But the strength and the love in him alike forbade him that power's usage.

The vine had once been his,—the vine was now so exquisitely fair, so laden with all golden fruitage,—should his be the vengeance that should tear it up by the roots because it blossomed within the walls of palaces, and his hand no more could touch its glories?

The worm was at its root, indeed; but none knew this. The vine might flourish, and grow exceedingly, and die at last in age and honor, with rich rare fruit borne by it and begat on it: and the worm might never waken, never gnaw, never be discerned.

The worm might be forever mute and numb: the vine live on,—if left in peace.

He could not, of his own hand, break down its glorious crowns of bloom, even though these bloomed for a prince's pleasure, for a despoiler's delight.

CHAPTER LXXII.

WHAT he would have seen could his gaze have pierced through the dark mass of crowded houses, and across the reach of the river, into the Palace of the Lirà, would have been a woman standing in the midst of a vast painted chamber, that was all aglow with gold and silver, and white and amber, and the marvelous chromatic hues that stole from a million blossoming flowers—standing, amid that luxury and wealth, as a stag upon the bare gray moorland, in the raw winter dawn, stands at bay for life.

A woman, erect as a desert-palm, fierce as a desert-beast, with one hand clinched against her breast, as though she drove a dagger into it to end a life made unendurable by shame; with her head drawn back, and her face bloodless, and in all her limbs the frozen horror that sculptors give to those who gaze at the Eumenides.

What he would have heard, could any sound have stolen on the air from the mansions of the princes to the attic where he watched, would have been a soft, smooth, cruel voice, that murmured:

"You tell me that I lie? Look! is there no memory in her face? Ask her, my lord, if this thing be not true? if she never lived on the mercy of alms, if she never was a stray thing of shame, if she never took my gold toys one glad summer; if she never owed bread to the man she forsook; if she never laughed under the roof of the actress whom she and you call Coriolis? Ask her!—only ask. See! how her eyes answer you, though her lips are as dumb as the dead. She is a great duchess, no doubt; the world has done her honor to-night; there is no beauty to compare with her beauty; and there is no pride so proud as her pride! She will be also your wife, you have said?—then her honor must be pure as the snow!—is it I who am dreaming these things? Nay, ask her—she surely must know! And her birth-name, too; you would

wish to hear that. Can she tell it? I fear not! She was a foundling, you see! Well, I—I who thought of your honor, over-much, it may seem,—learned this also an hour ago. Marriage made her a duchess,—the world has made her a queen,—and you, you would make her wife, as you say. But birth (a mere accident this, as democrats show us!)—birth only made her,—Madelon Bruno. Madelon Bruno!—the world knows that name; the world thought it scarcely poetic enough for her mother who bore it. Madelon Bruno, the daughter, is the Duchess de Lirà: Madelon Bruno, the mother, is—Coriolis."

CHAPTER LXXIII.

The night slowly waned, and grew into morning. He never moved, but sat there with his eyes fastened on the ground, and his teeth ground upon each other, and his face gray, and dark with bloodless shadow like that of the dead man, yonder, on his narrow bed.

In a sense there seemed a fitness to him in this companionship of Death. He, who had so often loved the fullest crowds of men, the laughter of the fair and wake, the humors of the streets, the gay eccentric follies of humanity in herds, found, in a measure, sympathy and friendship in that old, worn-out, lifeless frame that rested there—at peace at last,—after its fourscore years of travail, pain, and want, and thankless labor.

Death!—was it, after all, the only mercy that life brought?

Surely;—since those whom the gods love, die young; and they who live, live to cry wearily, soon or late, "O that we were dead!"

Life, to him, had been sweet, and luscious, and ever pregnant with flavor, like a paradise-apple, God-given; but now at its close it grew hateful, and bitter as wormwood, and empty as ashes; and he would fain that he had died in the years of his youth.

As the first beams of the daybreak stole through the lattice in the roof, and the warmth from the sunrise awakened the street swallows under the eaves, there came a swift soft movement like the brushing wing of a hastening bird. Through the unlatched door, into that shadowy place, another shadow came, the shadow of a woman that glided to his feet, and fell there.

"Is it true?" she cried. "Oh, God!—is it true?"

Her voice had no likeness of itself; her face had the startled ghostly horror of those who have beheld unnatural crime; her whole form sank and crouched like the body of a spent and dying stag. All the rich color and undulation of robes fit for an empress swept about her, crushed and torn; on her breast and among her hair great jewels glittered; beneath her bosom a girdle of precious stones coiled like a serpent; and all their glow and splendor made only deadlier by their contrast the whiteness of her gasping mouth, the stricken horror in her eyes, the convulsive helpless trembling of her limbs, as she dropped there.

"Is it true?" she cried, clasping him with her arms as though in him only were her strength against this shame which killed her. "Is it true?"

"Is what true?"

The words died almost as they passed his lips; his face was bloodless as her own; his hands shook like hers as he strove to raise her. To gain time—breath—thought—he asked her this; but without answer he knew what this thing was which drove from her all her glory and her power, and sent her here to crouch like a fallen and accursed creature thus.

"You know!—you know!" she gasped, reading that knowledge in his face. "Look at me,—meet my eyes,—if it be a dream, a lie, a hideous device of hatred, look at me; look long and pityingly as you used to look, and tell me *so* that it is false!"

She clung to him as she used to cling in the brief sorrows of her childhood, and gazed up in his face with eyes that sought to pierce his very heart.

There was a great agony in his own; and they looked out, not at her, but at the morning stars that shone beyond the lattice.

She was answered.

Her head dropped; her arms let go their hold; she fell as the dying stag falls beneath the last death-shot.

He stooped and raised her, and bore her into the empty attic near, which had been the dead cobbler's place of labor, and laid her down upon the heap of leathern shreds, that served there as a couch of ease.

She lay like an animal stunned; her arms flung out, her head bowed on them, her hair unloosened, with the jewels braided in it, sweeping the bare boarding of the garret-floor.

He stood above her, his eyes filled with an infinite love, an infinite pity, an infinite love such as never again would be hers, let her lovers gather by thousands as they would.

In the years of her gladness he had been forgotten; in the hour of her misery she had remembered him. He had his vengeance.

There was silence in the chamber; the city still rested from labor; the sun had barely risen; the shadows of night still hovered where she lay. He never spoke, he never touched her, he never wondered why she had come to him thus, or who had borne to her that secret which he thought was his own alone. He only gazed at her with an unutterable yearning love;—and, as the diamonds on her robes glittered in the gloom, he shuddered as though he saw in them the smile of those devils of vanity and desire, who had been his rivals, and her tempters, in the old years that were gone.

Suddenly she lifted herself, and looked up at him with blind eyes.

"Is it true, then?" she asked, still.

He stooped over her, and his voice had that tenderness which had survived in him through all the wrongs and all the cruelties her wanton, thankless egotisms had dealt to it.

He bent over her and laid his hand with the pitying touch of old upon her head. He was silent; he could not answer her in any other wise.

"Oh, my God, my God!" she moaned, aloud. "If only you had left me to perish in my infancy!"

I answered nothing.

The bitterness of this reproach was all that paid him for his martyrdom!

She raised herself with the fierce gesture of a wounded leopardess.

"And you knew this? Always?——"

"Never till yesterday."

"Yet it is true, you say? Speak! answer me! Tell me all you know,—all,—no matter how hideous or how vile!"

"But what brutes have borne it to you?——"

"No matter! Tell me all—worse than I have heard there cannot be. Quick,—for the love of Heaven, or you will drive me mad!"

Half risen from the floor, with her hands clinched on his wrists, and her dilated eyes gazing up into his face, she forced the truth from him with imperious, delirious command. Resistance maddened her, as she had said;—this woman who awoke from dreams of the heritage of kings to find her parentage in poverty and shame.

He obeyed, and told her all.

She heard in unbroken silence; crouching, as the magnificence of the leopardess crouches under the throes of pain, a dumb, passionate, breathless terror on her drooping face.

"And I saw him die—die at her feet!" she muttered.

The horror of her fate consumed her as with fire—fire wherein that staff of life, her pride, withered, and fell in ashes, as a reed held in a flame.

The shame of her mother was upon her like the weight of her own shame; the foulness that was her inheritance seemed to taint her like a plague; all the haughty, rejoicing scorn of her high estate had vanished as the prophet's gourd vanished in the space of a fleet summer night.

In all her glory she was desolate.

And in her desolation it was not to her friends, or her lovers, or her courtiers, that she turned, but to the man whom she had forsaken, and forgotten, and abjured.

"It is just," she murmured, dreamily, gazing at him with her hot, wild, tearless eyes. "I sinned against you;—how could I choose but sin, having been born of

her? This is just vengeance on my crime to you, vengeance sent of God!"

"Hush! Are His weapons a frail woman's vices? And what vengeance have I ever asked of God or man on you?"

The grave, sweet patience of his voice stilled the passion in her as it had once stilled the wayward and rebellious spirit of her childhood.

She was silent, lying there with her head still bowed down on her arms, her eyes still hidden from the rays of day.

His face grew dark with wrath—wrath against her destroyer; his breath came sharply and hardly, as he bent over and asked:

"What devil was pitiless enough to tell you?"

She lifted herself upon her elbow, and under their swollen lids her eyes flashed with a blue light like flame.

"A devil? yes; a devil who came in angel's guise to save his father's honor! My young lover whom I thought the fairies sent me—the tempter to whom she would have sold me, body and soul, in my child's ignorance."

"What! his son?"

"His son. You know it, then? Oh, Heaven, why not have warned me? Ah! hush! I dare to reproach you—I!—when my whole life has been a crime which you have never wearied of forgiving! Listen! I saw him once, five nights ago, at Villiers, only for one instant as he passed me by. I knew him then, and he knew me. On the morrow he was gone, leaving a gracious message of regret. That very night I promised to be Estmere's wife; that very night I had sworn to myself that nothing on my part should be hidden from his sight. But where was the use to take him truth that only could have seemed to him a fear? Once having looked on his son's face, I held my peace. I let my doom come as it would. I kept, so long as fate would leave them to me, his love, his trust, his honor. I knew how soon they would be struck and perish. This was madness? I think I have been mad since the night I saw that smooth, soft, devilish face; I have been like a creature in a dream;—the dream has broken; I am wakened now—wakened to see, and

hear, and feel all things—my misery, my wickedness, my shame."

Her hands clinched on him as she spoke, and drew him down to her, seeming thus to keep hold upon some strength, some reason.

He shuddered as he gazed on her.

"Those are wild words," he murmured. "The shame is another's, not your own, and—you forget. Your father was poor indeed, but he had honor in his simple, bitter, martyred life that no wife's sin could touch. You are his, no less than you are hers. He was a rude, unlearned seaman, it is true, but he had in him honesty, heroism, truth. Are these mean birthrights?"

A shiver ran through her crouching frame. To the woman who had believed herself born from the secret nuptials of some Porphyrogenitus, the sea-bird's nest looked foul as any vulture's; and the strength and the simplicity of this compensation to which he bade her turn were on heights beyond her reach.

The man, nobly bred, could recognize the nobility that lies in character apart from all circumstance and all chances. The woman, basely born, could measure by nothing save the visible symbols of dignity and greatness, of poverty and shame.

"Birthright!" she echoed, with a laugh that had in it the sound of the laughter of Coriolis. "Do not say that word, if you would bid me keep my senses. To night I was in all my glory. Kings and princes were under my roof. I had his love and the world's honor. In all Paris there was not a creature greater or more envied than I. All splendors, and all follies, and all graces that my wealth could give, I gathered there. I knew that some evil would fall; I knew that his son would come there; I knew that the days of my peace were numbered. I chose that he should behold me at my greatest, my highest, my proudest; I chose so to score myself into his heart and his soul that he should never be able to put me away from them, strive how he would. I had my victory—so far. He loves me; oh, God, he loves me; but it is passion only; not such love as yours. Listen! to-night has been the most brilliant night of my life, and this is how it has ended"

Rising, and pacing to and fro, like a chained leopardess infuriate with its wounds, or cast down upon her rude couch in the exhaustion of despair, shrinking from the light of day, she told him how its horror had come to her, stealing like a thief in the night into her palace.

Every word that had been uttered had cut her like a scourge; she could number them as the quivering creature numbers his stripes by their separate sharp agonies.

He heard her in silence, his face hidden in his hands. What solace had he to give this woman to whom his love was nothing?

Once only he asked her—

"And he—he whom you are to wed? he loves you still?"

She laughed once more, the laugh that was so terrible in that silent place.

"Still! Is he like you, that evil and shame should only be titles to his pity and his pardon? No woman is loved so *twice*. He forced his son from my presence; he refused to believe, while others hearkened; he was generous, noble, great. It is his nature. But, once in solitude, I saw the look upon his face. How is it I live yet? It maddened me; I knew that I was dead to him—worse than dead—forever! I told him the truth of you and of myself. I told him everything my life had known. I prayed, I begged, I knelt to him,—not for his love, or his forgiveness, but only for his belief. It was his doubt that killed me."

"He doubts still?" His voice was stifled as he spoke, his hands were locked over his eyes.

"Doubt! oh, God, what is there for him to believe? I am a living lie to him and to the world. I implored, I conjured, I tempted him. Again and again he almost yielded; again and again I saw love, and love only, in his eyes; and yet I knew he would never yield utterly. There was such scorn in him, such dread of me, and such disdain. 'Not for your birth,' he cried to me; 'not for your mother's shame would you be less pure, less honored in my sight. It is your life, your lie! You tell me the truth now? it may be so. But it is told too late!' And then I grew mad, I think, and broke from him, and got

out into the street unseen, I know not how, and came to you, as beaten dogs come to the only creature that has pity for them."

And the love which she had slighted, and mocked, and trodden on so long, had vengeance on her, and grew in might and majesty before her sight, and was her only refuge now, her only friend, her only mercy. And yet! more dear than this, was that love which had disbelieved, which had scorned, which had repudiated her.

"What is my life worth if he be lost to me?" she cried. "What are my rank, my lands, my titles, my dignities, to me without him?"

In the intense self-absorption of her anguish, she never heeded what blows her words might strike upon the heart of her hearer.

All she remembered was that one great horror which enfolded her—the horror of that destiny which had hung over her when in the fair fancies of her infancy she had dreamed herself the daughter of the old dead kings of Gaul; the destiny which had seized her in the attained ambition of her womanhood, while she laughed in her glad scorn at fate, and love, and death; the destiny which clung around her, stifling her life as the fireweb of sorcery clung around Glauce.

He never spoke, where he stood against the open lattice, through which the hot air of the stormy and oppressive dawn poured like the fumes of a slaughter-house.

She, flung down upon the heap of leather, with her arms outstretched, and her face hidden on them, longed to bury herself from that searching light of coming day.

She thought that never more could she go forth into the sunshine, and meet the eyes of men, and be as she had been. Her past was branded, her present was laid waste; her future was accursed: the greatness that she had said could never pass away, was polluted and without worth; her dignities and her possessions, and all her glories in which she had exulted, as in a strength that made her godlike, were now of no avail.

They endured indeed, they were unchanged, unchangeable: but they could not cleanse the life whence here had

sprung; they could not give her back the pure and fragrant peace of honor. The shame of her mother was upon her—upon her for evermore.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

Above the million roofs of the city, the flush of the full day came. From out its nook the little monkey crept, and gazed at her with wondering, sad eyes. In the stillness, the great black door of the garret was thrust open—in its embrasure her lover stood.

He had tracked her hither.

The fairness of his face was livid, his voice was strangled in his throat, his eyes had the fury and the woe that men had seen once in them,—once—in the days of his youth, when the dishonor of his wife had been revealed to him.

He threw one glance on her,—one glance of unutterable horror,—then went straightway to the place where Tricotrin stood.

"She has fled to you!"

Tricotrin shook off his grasp; and stood silent: facing him, with the light of the dawn upon them.

She had fled to him!—well, who to her had so great a right, so high a title? All the hatred he bore to this man, as to her owner and his spoiler, stirred in him, and prevailed, and killed the old soft tenderness of early memories and of boyish love.

She, with a great cry, sprang from her wretched couch, and dragged herself to her lover's feet, and threw herself there in piteous abandonment, calling out to him to believe—to believe—only to believe.

He did not heed her, even while all his frame thrilled at her touch and burned under her beauty; he did not answer her; he did not raise her; he only looked still at the man in whom he saw her closest friend, his deadliest foe.

"What have you been to her?" he cried, aloud,—"her

husband, her father, her paramour? Answer me! What tie binds you? What bond unites you? Is it sin, or secrecy, or marriage, or blood? Answer me! What is this woman to you?"

Tricotrin, standing erect, with the gleam of the dawn on his face, and the darkness of evil passions in his soul, looked him in the eyes with a keen, hard, changeless gaze, and still kept silent.

"Answer me!" Estmere cried, again. "Answer me! or——"

She sprang up and caught his lifted arm, and drew his hands into hers, and clung to him so that he could not move unless he cast her off from him with violence, and trampled her aside.

"Wait, wait!" she muttered. "Strike me, not him. What guilt there is, is mine—mine, to you and to the world. There has never been anything on earth greater, gentler, more long-suffering, than his life to mine. I have been base to him, faithless, cowardly, unworthy; but he! —he has never once reproached me, never once deserted me. I was a wretched stray thing—you know, you know!—nameless, homeless, desolate, utterly; and he had pity upon me,—pity, when I was a little lost child dying of hunger save for the bread he gave me. Ah, God! call my crime what you will; curse me, loathe me, leave me,—that is just; but believe,—only believe. Give him justice, and give him honor. In my vanity and my sin I have refused him both so long."

The evil of the world had fallen from her, the false shame of her false pride had perished; truth and courage revived in this soul, wherein they had so long been dead; her voice rang clear and strong in all its suffering. He, whom she conjured, shuddered under that passionate appeal, and gazed down into her eyes, staggered, confused, unmanned, knowing not what to doubt, nor what to believe.

"If this be true," he murmured, "your sin to me weighs nothing beside your sin to him."

"No!" she cried, aloud, as she loosed her arms from about him, and sank down at his feet with the hot blood burning over all her drooping face.

"No. To you I sinned indeed, because I gained your love upon a lie; but you were a stranger; I owed you no debt, I bore you no allegiance: you were free to seek me, and as free to leave me. But to him my whole life has been a crime—a crime when I forsook him because ambition bribed me; a crime when I repaid him for his charity with discontent and with ingratitude; a crime when I was too base to let the world know all I owed him; a crime when I heard you slight him with your satires, and held my peace because I was too base a coward to dare lift up my voice in his defense and honor. It is hard for you to believe me,—yes!—I have forfeited belief. But, as God lives, I will not cease to kneel to you till you believe in him."

He looked down on her, blinded, bewildered, pierced to the heart, confused with a crowd of half-formed thoughts.

"Your love is so great for him?" he asked, the passion in his own soul jealously seizing on that which smote it the most cruelly.

Her eyes met his in one long look, then turned and rested on the man whom she had wronged.

"Yes, my love is great, now," she said, slowly; "but what is great,—great as eternity,—is my remorse."

He was silent; the force that lies in perfect and unflinching truth was in her now; it conquered him, it was stronger than he, it bore in on him with a witness he could no longer doubt, the purity of this passionless love, the intensity of this vain remorse. He knew that there was nothing in this love which he, as her lover, as her husband, need envy, or could suspect; he knew it, as men in such hours know truths that their colder reason would mock, their worldly skepticism would scorn. But he saw also that this remorse was for a guilt none the less base, none the less craven, because in its shame it was still chaste as ice, because in its selfishness no sensual stain was found.

He believed; but belief was as deadly to him as his doubt had been. She was as worthless, in his sight, as though she had been the faithless and dishonored wife of the man whom she had forsaken—of the man who stood

there, in the radiance of the dawn, motionless, wordless, urging no claim, seeking no justification, giving no sign that he heard or that he saw under all the passionate invocation, the violent despair, of this woman who had abandoned him for the treasures and the triumphs of the world.

It was at him, and not at her, that he himself looked, as he spoke.

"This is true?" he asked of him.

The eyes of Tricotrin met his own with a strange weariness, and scorn, and pity, all in one, in their regard.

"It is true," he answered, briefly. His voice was cold and harsh, and all its melody was gone. For once he did not seek to aid her; for once he did not stir to lift her burden from her; for once he left her, alone, with the love that she had chosen in the stead of his. If it failed her, if it scorned her, if it repudiated her, it had been her choice. He left it to deal with her as it would.

She, kneeling there at the feet of her lover as a criminal at the feet of her judge, looked upward in his face.

"You believe now?" she cried to him.

He bent his head.

"Yes, I believe."

In the assent there was a colder, a more hopeless, a more unyielding condemnation of her sin than could have spoken in the uttermost ferocity and abandonment of upbraiding. He believed; and because he believed in the truth of her history, he believed also in the cowardice and the falsehood of her life.

She rose up, slowly, and stood before him; her arms were crossed upon her bosom that heaved and swelled beneath their pressure; her face was like the marble mask that sculptors take from a dead loveliness; her eyes were full of an unutterable woe.

But she prayed no more for mercy, she implored no more for pardon; she had asked for belief, and it had been given her; it was all, she knew, that she could claim; and the superb pride which had been her idol for so long, and which that night had been stricken down as a stately palm is struck by lightning, was in her still, though broken

and stilled by the bitter shame, the abject humiliation that her birth had brought.

All her life through, she knew, she had wronged Love. If now Love had its vengeance, and had forsaken her, was the crime hers, or Love's?

It was only from his look that she cowered and shrank, as from a thing unbearable.

"Have you no pity?" she cried, suddenly, the one appeal wrung from her by her utter desolation. "My mother's shame I knew as little as you until to-night. I wronged you; yes, but not one tithe as I wronged him. He has forgiven—shall not you forgive?"

Estmere turned from her with a shudder, as men turn from the dead disfigured body of the beauty they have loved.

"Forgive! forgive!" he echoed; "what is it to forgive? My pardon cannot give you back your honor and your truth."

"Oh God! you said you loved me!"

"Loved you! Men love women that are foul as they are fair. I gave you tenfold more than love; I gave you —trust!"

A shiver shook her all down her slender, supple, lofty frame. She knew that never more could this man trust her with the one sweet, full, idolatrous, and perfect faith with which he had believed in her when his first kiss had touched her lips. For faith is as the white pure crown of the century aloe, which, once cut down, can bloom no more within the space of the same lives that first rejoiced in it.

He, drawing his gaze from her as one tempted beyond his strength draws it from the loveliness that assails him, moved away slowly, with his head sunk on his chest.

"The woman false once is false always," he said, briefly, with a quiver in his proud clear voice that no manhood and no pride could stay. "Men, younger, happier than I, might give you their faith still—I cannot. You have killed my life, you shall not beggar me of honor."

And without one backward look at her—one look whereby that exquisite and sensuous loveliness might steal his strength and make him the mere slave of pas-

sion,—he thrust the great door backward heavily, and passed the threshold of the chamber.

She let him go without a word, a cry, a gesture. She never changed her posture, but stood there, drawing her costly gem-sown robes together, as a beggar, perishing in winter cold, draws his rags around his frozen limbs.

Only once she looked at him whom she had wronged—at him by whom, even yet, she had not been forsaken.

"You have your vengeance," she said, slowly. "It is just."

He had his vengeance,—the vengeance which the old dead Loirois woman had foretold,—the vengeance which broke his own heart as it fell.

She stole backward with slow numbed movement to the rude couch of skins, and crouched on it once more. She had no memory of her home, her rank, her household, her dignities; she had no memory save for this one thing,—that she was the daughter of Coriolis. The hours passed; time was nothing to them; the noon came; she still lay there, as Magdalen beneath the cross; and he had never stirred from where he stood beneath the lattice, with his arms resting on the wooden sill, and his head bowed down upon them.

Since the sun had risen there had been a low, hoarse murmur on the air: a sound like the sound of the depths of the sea. But here it was dulled by distance, and it smote their ear,—unheard.

It was the sound of conflict:—it was the sound of the hymn of blood.

Suddenly it deepened, and came upon the silence in loud fitful gusts, and pierced his lethargy as the war-note rouses the stupor of the wounded charger.

He heard the Marseillaise.

"God forgive me! I forgot them!" he cried, aloud: for the only time in all the many years since first he had elected to be one with them, and make their dwelling and their portion, their pleasure and their suffering, his, he had forgotten the people.

"Wait you here," he murmured to her. "It is the children only who have risen. But there is danger, there is slaughter. God forgive me,—I forgot!"

And he left her, and went swiftly through the house, that was deserted as though pestilence had swept it bare, and passed out into the hot noontide—into the streets where the students had risen.

It was a revolt of the children,—an outbreak of youth's noble madness, a passion of boys' futile frenzy; but the massacre of the children had begun, and would not cease till the sun had its setting.

A woman, weeping and frantic, threw herself in his passage:

"Oh, friend! save my son!" she cried to him. "You are as a god to these children! He is all I have upon earth,—you know! A creature of seventeen summers. And he is there at the barricades! Ah!—they die in their madness, proud of it. It were harder to live for mere duty!"

He put her aside; and went onward.

"God forgive me!" he said, still in his heart. "I had forgot them—I had forgot them."

CHAPTER LXXV.

In one of the streets of the city, in one of its white and golden palaces, there was a balcony hung with scarlet draperies for the festival that had been a baptism of blood.

Many a time there had come thither a woman, sunny-haired, laughing, full of gladness, tossing sweetmeats and flowers to the crowd, leaning there with roses in her breast, and her arms indolently folded, to watch the spectacle beneath of military pomp, or of imperial entry, or of the masked fooleries of the idle carnival time. And many a time the passing multitudes had looked up, and laughed back to her, and shouted their acclaims, and caught her tossed flower-buds and kissed them: for they had loved her, since she had been clothed with the divinity which this age beholds in Vice.

The scarlet folds hung stirless on the breeze; the gilded butterflies upon them sparkled in the sun; the Eastern birds murmured merrily; the exotics bloomed in every hue, above in that bright balcony, while the slaughter raged beneath.

But on its marble floor the woman lay lifeless, with the slow blood welling from her breast—a stray shot had found her where she leaned to watch the pageantry of strife, and she had fallen here among her flowers. Below, the populace had paused one instant in the tumult of their passions, and had murmured—

"It is Coriolis—killed!"

For fate was still merciful to this woman, who had been merciless to all, still tender to this spoiler, who knew not tenderness, still full of gifts to this assassinatress, whose hands had ever been outstretched for gold. It slew her when fear had begun to touch her; it slew her when her past sin rose against her; it slew her ere her beauty perished, ere her power waned. And Coriolis—a creature soulless as the butterflies that were her emblem—had the noblest requiem that a human soul can have;—she had the sorrow of a people.

Verily, men are just.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

In a dim, gray, ancient street, outside the passage-way, where the town was still old, in the heart of the students, where no cannon could sweep and no squadrons deploy, but each combat perforce was fought out hand to hand, in the old fierce, fair fashion,—there the first barricade had been thrown. A barricade barring the entrance; a barricade that already had served to repulse the soldiery sent up against it, though held only by youths,—goaded on by their comrades' imprisonment; blind with dreams of impossible worlds; lashed to action by agitators and demagogues; beholding only the excellence of liberty, not

seeing the excellence of patience. Youths of all ages, all tempers; some gay with zest for the devil's dance of a riot, some grave with a purpose too hard for their years; some drunk with their own evil passions, some with pure longing for freedom; some the ignorant poor tools of conspirators; some the ardent young prophets of truth.

They filled the narrow windings of the street; they climbed upon its roofs, and its ironwork, and its lamp-posts; they knelt at its windows with their muskets at rest on its ledges; they defended its stones as though they were the altar-stones of their holiest temple. They shouted; they sang; they dealt death and they took death; they fought shoulder to shoulder; they mounted, and dived, and hid, and charged; they swarmed over the timber mountain that they had cast up betwixt them and the world; they tasted blood, and were even like young hounds whose tongues are whetted by a dead deer's gore.

And ever and again as one among them was shot down, they lifted his corpse upon the timber to raise the pile higher, and sang more loudly their Marseillaise.

Above the hiss of the bullets, above the cries of the women, above the roll of distant volleys as the musketry sought their quarter, above the din and the tumult of carnage, the great chorus rang out, dominant and triumphant: as it first rang over the crowds of Paris, and over the battle-plains of Europe, while its creator fled through the mountains, proscribed, and desolate, and friendless. The chorus of the hymn that is deathless, because, while men shall live, its passions, and its woes, and its agony of vain desires must live also, unquenched, unstilled, and unattained,—born half of hell, born half of heaven.

Yet above even that divine and devilish chant of the nations' liberties, his own voice rose as he forced his way through amid them, and sprang up on to their topmost pinnacle of the jammed mass of wood and stone. A great shout welcomed him:—ever since the day had broken, men in the paroxysms of fear, or in the heat of conflict, had asked of one another, Where was he?

"Ah! faithless and strengthless!" he called to them. "And only a day since you pledged me your word to keep peace!"

They were the people of his own quarter; the youths that came round him like dogs round their keeper; only a brief space earlier, he, who had come to save them if they would be saved, had spent the days and the nights among them in their cellars, and clubs, and workshops, and painting-rooms, striving to hold them back from destruction, striving to make them wait, for the dear sake of that liberty in whose name they were mad for war. And these,—these few at the least,—these two hundred and more who fought here, had listened, and given way, and vowed to keep from the snare spread for them and their kind by men to whom rivers of blood were as the waters of Pactolus.

They had promised: and thus they redeemed their word. Thus, with the knives at their waist, and the steel in their hands, and the lust to slay in their eyes.

He stood unarmed in their midst; on the highest place, where the sun's rays came fullest and the bullets fell fastest. His eyes swept the crowd as the eagle's the earth; all the warmth, and the light, and the passion had flushed back on his face at the sight of the gleam of the steel, at the sound of the anthem of revolution.

On them a sudden hush fell—a sudden humiliation smote.

They had promised him peace,—and at his feet the dead already lay three deep!

"Could you not be faithful one day through?" he cried to them, in the reproach which all those who love and serve humanity are driven to cast against it, by the weight of its own measureless ingratitude. "You promised me—you, my own people!—and your promise is kept thus! I knew that you were betrayed; I knew that you were drawn down into a pit; I knew that they left your sting in you, only that by it you might slay yourselves, like the scorpion in the flames. I warned you, and you heard, and you swore to keep in your homes and be untempted. And this is the fulfilling of your oath!——"

The youths, pausing, and taking breath, and crowding one on another about the barricade, heard him, and were ashamed. One lad, the youngest of them all, the child of whom his mother had spoken, lifted his fair and glow-

ing face with reverent love upon it, and gripped his rifle closer:

"It is for liberty!" he murmured. "Have you not taught us,—without it life is worthless?"

The eyes of Tricotrin rested on his with infinite tenderness, infinite anguish:

"I have taught you that? No! Life without it is joyless; but life without joy may be great. The greatness of life is sacrifice; is sacrifice liberty, think you? Oh children, you are blind and astray! You spend your strength following shadows. This is love of your country, you call it; and heroism, and all things that are noble? It is but the froth of your passions, the rage and the fret of your boyhood."

A storm of hisses broke across his words. They loved him, indeed, but in that moment of exultant fury, of unappeased bloodthirst, they would not hearken even to him. He waited, patiently and unmoved, until their fury had in some measure died out from its own violence.

Then again he spoke, with a gesture that awed the loudest, the fiercest, the most turbulent, to silence.

"You lift your hands against me?—you think your yells and your threats will make me deal you a demagogue's flatteries? Pshaw! men who dread death scarcely come hither. All this while have you known me so little? Demagogues, to delight you, would lash on your passions. I displease you because I bid you have patience.

"To die, when life can be lived no longer with honor, is greatness indeed. But to die because life galls, and wearies, and is hard to pursue:—there is no greatness in that! It is the suicide's plea for his own self-pity. You live under tyranny, corruption, dynastic lies hard to bear, despotic enemies hard to bear—I know. But you forget, what all followers of your creed ever forget, that without corruption, untruth, weakness, ignorance, in a nation itself, such things could not be in its rulers. Men can bridle the ass and can drive the sheep, but who can drive the eagle or bridle the lion? A people that was strong and pure, no despot could yoke to his vices.

"Against the foreign foes of your country are in your

youth if she need it. But against her internecine enemies live out your life in continual warfare. When I tell you this, do you dream that I spare you? Children—you have yet to learn what life is! Who could think it hard to die in the glory of strife, drunk with the sound of the combat, and feeling no pain in the swoon of a triumph? Few men whose blood was hot and young would ask a greater ending. But to keep your souls in patience; to strive unceasingly with evil; to live in self-negation, in ceaseless sacrifices of desire; to give strength to the weak, and sight to the blind, and light where there is darkness, and hope where there is bondage; to do all these through many years unrecognized of men, content only that they are done with such force as lies within you,—this is harder than to seek the cannons' mouths, this is more bitter than to rush, with drawn steel, on your tyrants.

"Your women cry out against you because you leave them to starve and to weep while you give your hearts to revolution and your bodies to the sword. Their cry is the cry of selfishness, of weakness, of narrowness, the cry of the sex that sees no sun save the flame on its hearth: yet there is truth in it,—a truth you forget. The truth,—that, forsaking the gold-mine of duty which lies at your feet, you grasp at the rainbow of glory; that, neglectful of your own secret sins, you fly at public woes and at national crimes. Can you not see that if every man took heed of the guilt of his own thoughts and acts, the world would be free and at peace? It is easier to rise with the knife unsheathed than to keep watch and ward on your own passions; but do not cheat yourself into believing that it is nobler, and higher, and harder. What reproach is cast against all revolutionists?—that the men who have nothing to lose, the men who are reckless and outlawed, alone raise the flag of revolt. It is a satire; but in every satire there lies the germ of a terrible fact.

"You,—you who are children still, you whose manhood is still a gold scarcely touched in your hands, a gold you can spend in all great ways, or squander for all base uses;—you can give the lie to that public reproach,

if only you will live in such wise that your hands shall be clean, and your paths straight, and your honor unsullied through all temptations. Wait, and live so that the right to judge, to rebuke, to avenge, to purify, become yours through your earning of them. Live nobly first; and then teach others how to live.

"Lay down your arms—you have not won the title for their usage—lay them down, I bid you; and when you shall be able to point to high deeds done by you, and high thoughts born from you, then come forth so armed again; and none shall dare to cast at you the jibe that because you knew not how to live, therefore, and therefore only, you would die!"

They heard, and were very still; and paused, half sullen, half afraid. They knew that he spoke truth, but that truth was cruel to their pride. Their souls were moved and disquieted; but their self-love was stung into rage. They could not hear his voice without the instinct of honor and obedience, as children hear the voice of their father. But they were hardened against him, and they murmured loud and deep.

One young boy alone, standing by his side,—the son of the woman who had besought him in the street,—lifted his bright, flushed, kindling face.

"Do with us as you will," he said, softly—and he laid down his musket, and loosened from his breast the badge of insurrection.

Tricotrin smiled on him.

"That is well. Remember your mother now—in the days of your youth—you will not serve your country less, but more, when manhood comes to you."

The action broke the spell of awe and reverence that had held entranced the throng around them: as baffled hawks, missing the heron, swoop on fieldfares harmless among the corn, so their baffled, stifled rage turned upon the lad.

"He would forsake us! He turns traitor!" they hooted against him, and they rained the stones of the streets at the child. One—more drunk than all with the passions of the hour—heaved up a great block of granite, dislodged from the edge of the pavement, and hurled it

hurtling through the air to strike to earth the slender figure of the boy.

The square gray block sped on its way as from a catapult; winged by the force of hate.

Tricotrin looked upward: he saw its darkness betwixt him and the sun, he seized the boy and drew him backward, backward into his own place. The stone descended:—the boy stood erect, unharmed; his deliverer fell with the weight upon him.

The wail of a people's agony broke from all the multitude below, then hushed into a dead dread silence,—the silence of a speechless terror.

He lay there with the great stone upon his chest, where it had struck him, and had felled him at a stroke, as lightning fells the tree. From beneath it the blood slowly welled: the bones of his chest were crushed in, and bent, and broken.

The boy, for whom he had thus met death, sank on his knees, and covered his eyes with his hands, and cried out to God to slay him also, since through him this martyrdom had come. Those about him, youths likewise, trembling, and weeping, and afraid as with the fear of crime, thrust off the brutal weight, and raised him, and called on his name with piteous outcries, and forgot every other thing on earth, save that this man who loved them had died for them:—died thus; in the hour that they had revolted from him, and disobeyed him, and refused to hearken to his voice.

Then all that breathless stillness broke up into an awful tumult:—the multitude, mad with grief, and with rage, and with remorse, flung themselves on his destroyer, and seized, and choked, and tore him limb from limb, while through the crowded quarter there rang, from mouth to mouth, the cry that Tricotrin was dead.

On the pile of the barricade the noontide sun poured down. They lifted him up on a shelf of timber, beneath the drooped folds of their flag of liberty. His head was sunk, his eyes were sightless, the blood welled slowly from his breast:—for the first time in all his life amid them he gave no answer to their prayer, no pity to their anguish.

Yet, even now, voiceless, motionless, senseless, he was still their deliverer from evil; for, farther onward, as the troops came up to the massacre, to the ruthless mowing down of all these lives that were as ripe corn for their sickles, the artillery were checked and forbidden to advance, and dimly heard those in authority above them murmur that the people would no more have soul or strength for combat, since Tricotrin was dead. And the soldiers halted, afar off in the noontide heat, and came no more against them, but left them alone with their remorse.

They trampled under their feet, in the insanity of vengeance, the body of his murderer; and spat upon the corpse; and stamped its features into a hideous mass; and left it, battered and shapeless, in the gutter of the street. Then, raving, weeping, tearing their hair, shrieking his name aloud, they closed once more upon the barricade. They were as children whose father had perished;—he had loved them so well, death would have no power to make him deaf to their cries, merciless to their despair!

As though their voices called him, indeed, back to this earth on which they lingered, desolate and bereaved, his consciousness returned, his blindness passed, his eyes unclosed and rested on them. Each breath was torture, each moment numbered; but his thoughts were for them, not for himself.

He signed to those who strove to rouse him, to let him be, to let him lie in such peace as was still left him. He knew that before the sun should have declined from its zenith he would be no more amid the world of men; no more live this life that to him had been ever so fair, and so rich, and so worthy the living. His bloodless lips smiled still as he looked on them.

"Children—do not grieve for me. Death is gentle and generous. See! it spares me sickness and age."

His voice sank; each word was a pang, as he drew breath through the lungs on which the crushed breastbone pressed as with the pressure of an iron vice. The throngs around him only answered with a great sob that came as from one heart. The tears rained down their cheeks, they stretched their arms to him as though to

seize him from the hold of death. The women rent their robes and wailed as the women of Rome at the tomb in the Campus Martius; their little children were trodden under their feet forgotten; from mouth to mouth, from house to house, reaching those that fought in distant streets, reaching those that crouched in vaults and catacombs, this one cry rang—that they had slain him.

The full sun was upon his face; he looked upward at its noonday glory:—and the smile that had come ever on his lips when he had beheld the gladness of its rising, over plain, and lake, and forest, came there still, in this, his death-hour.

"It is well," he murmured. "Why will you grieve? It is well. I die at noon;—ere the darkness of night sets in; ere the night of age overtakes me. My people—if you will that I die content, let my life purchase yours; leave bloodshed, and go in peace. Shall it be that you will refuse me this, the last thing that I shall ask of you?"

With the strength that so long had been in him, he lifted himself on his arm, and conquered the physical pangs that devoured him. His voice was low and stifled; yet never in all the hours of its eloquence had it reached so far to the hearts of the people, had it stirred their innermost souls so deeply, as the wind stirs the depths of the ocean.

"Answer me!" he cried to them, strong in that moment through the love he bore them, and victorious over the power of death. "Answer me! Will you grant me this because you have killed me? Will you go in peace, and save your bodies from fruitless slaughter? Answer me, if ever you loved me!"

They were silent, pierced to the quick; then, still as with one mouth, they lifted up their voices.

"We say as he said,—do with us as you will!"

A glory that was greater than the glory from the sun shone in his eyes as he heard.

"It is well," he said, softly, once more. "Forget not your word when I be dead."

And they cast down their weapons, and broke them asunder, and wept sorely; as children weep, refusing to be comforted, because their hearth is cold, their bodies

are famished, their hearts are desolate, their lives are fatherless and friendless.

His eyes wandered dreamily over the crowd, seeking hither and thither, seeking for a face that was not amid them. Then, suddenly, they rested on a far-off gloomy place, where, in the shadow of an arch, one watcher stood aloof, and gazed upon the conflict. He stretched his hand out, and pointed thither.

"Bring him!" he muttered to them. "Bring him,—yonder,—do you see?"

The throng surged closer together, then rolled asunder, and parted, and left a passage free.

He whom he had summoned came, and stood, with the light on his fair, cold, weary face, against the black piles of the timber of the barricade, against this death-bed of wood and iron whereon the man who had died for the people rested content,—as on a prince's nuptial bed.

Tricotrin, leaning still upon one hand, stretched out the other to him.

"Brother,—you may know *now*."

Death, ere it laid the seal of eternal silence on his lips, let them breathe once more the name that by Life had been forbidden them.

And the people drew back, and left them alone, and gathered together, hushed and frightened, as dogs that gaze, helpless, at human passions and human woe, and vaguely thrill with the despair and the divinity of both.

* * * * * *

The words that passed their lips none heard. That recognition in the shadow of death none watched. The people stood aloof, wondering, and still afraid.

All that they saw was the proud head of the great noble bent down lower, and lower, and lower in reverence and awe: all that they heard was one futile reproach that broke from him and pierced the stillness.

"Oh God! Why have you been lost to me so long?"

The voice that answered him was too faint to reach their straining ears:

"Why? why? Because I loved my freedom; because I knew that not one hour would you have kept your state and station if you once had known. It was a child's

quixotic folly—yes; but it never brought me one regret. Let no regret be with you. That old Dante—you had forgot it. Yet you might have remembered;—it was the priest's gift to me for my quick learning of the Latin that he loved. Ah!—you recall the day now? You believe? —yes; you believe. If you doubted, there are papers in the attic yonder, that would vouch to you. Is my life strange in your sight now? Do you see mystery in it, or shame?"

His brother's hands closed upon his.

"I dared to judge you! I dared to condemn you in my pride and my blindness. Oh Christ, if only I had known!"

He smiled; the old soft ironic humor laughed still in his eyes, even through the mists that dimmed them.

"Ah! You thought me astray in my ways and my creeds, you thought me a wanderer and a profitless idler. You were right,—from your view. Dignities have befitted you well: I would not have borne the burden and heat of the ermine; I could not have lived unless free. My mother was sea-born, you know, and perished,—stifled under your pomp."

His listener's frame shook like a woman's. All the chillness of long habit and of social eminence was shattered in him as a glacier shatters in its fall. The bitterness of this hour was infinite; and, by its very force, burned out that canker of a too hard scorn, of a pride too pitiless and too incredulous, which so long had marred the nobility of his temper.

His justice, that he had deemed so pure, had proved but warped opinion. His vision, that he had deemed so clear, had been but purblind prejudice. He scorned himself; and was crushed under that anguish of self-reproach with which he surveyed his own fallibility and condemned his own injustice. And there was no atonement possible for him; he learned all that he had lost, all that he had misread, all that he had missed, only in the moment when to learn them was too late, only when they passed away from him forever.

"And all these years I have but thieved from you!" he muttered. "All I gave you when we met were sus-

picion and derision! One look—one accent—should have sufficed to me."

"Nay—reproach not yourself thus. What remorse can there lie at your door? Yet if you think that you owe to me aught—pay it in one fashion."

"Demand of me what you will! Is not all that I possess your own?"

"No! you possess your will and your pride—those are not mine to bend. If you will indeed give me what I desire, yield me these——"

"Yield them? You have killed them! Before your life, how can I see any other thing save a usurper's fraud and falsehood in my own?"

"Hush! you were in ignorance. If you had known, you would have beggared yourself in an hour, sooner than have continued to enjoy. Give me these—your passions—nevertheless. Give me them, and take *her* back to your pardon, to your love, to your life. You will not?"

"Will not? I dare not!"

"Because she is the child of Coriolis?"

"Because she is faithless, and without truth."

"She will be true to you, and to you faithful. I have forgiven; shall not you forgive?"

His brother was silent: his face was hidden on his hands.

"I have forgiven," he who pleaded for her urged again, "and what is your wrong to mine?"

"As she wronged you, so will she wrong me."

"Not so: you have her love. I never had it."

"That you had not is her guilt?"

"No. She loves me as a gay child loves—no more. To you she gives the love no woman gives save once. Dying here, I swear to you that she has purity, and honor, and a soul that through you may be lifted to all high things. If you heed not the shame of her birth, no other shame is on her. In my letters you will find her dead husband's witness to her perfect innocence—men, dying, do not lie. She suffers, she is crushed under brutal humiliation; shall you also strike her, now that she is prostrate? Great God!—how shall I plead with you?

You tell me your pride is broken, and you resist me thus? Look! all her years through I have guarded her from pain, and found her joy. Will you make my life a failure at the last, because you will condemn and put away from you this only creature that I love? For my sake—not for hers—give her your pardon! I have forgiven,—I!—I tell you that you shall not refuse to her what I have yielded. I tell you that you shall not dare to judge when I already have declared her sinless!"

He lifted himself upon his arm; his voice rose strong and sonorous; his eyes flashed with the passions of other days. He spoke no more as a suppliant; he spoke as a sovereign speaks, against whom there is no appeal.

There was a long silence.

Then, at last, his brother raised his head and looked at him with one long, weary, reverent gaze.

"For your sake be it," he muttered, while his proud lips trembled. "I believe—I will strive also to forgive."

Tricotrin smiled: the smile of one victorious, but whose victory is wrested from the grave.

"You have paid me all your debt. Be merciful to her; keep her in gladness and in honor. This legacy I leave you—Viva's life."

His head fell back, his lungs bled inwardly, exhaustion overcame him; and through the throngs a loud wail went, and echoed once again through all the passage-ways, and over the close-standing roofs; till its reverberation shook all silent inmost places into sound, and startled sleeping infants in their cradles, and awakened old and helpless men from their shivering lethargy by their dull hearths.

There were movement and agitation in the crowd below; through them there forced her way, in blind, fierce passage, the lofty, slender form of a woman, who flew with swift sure feet up the side of the barricade, and came, and threw herself beside him where he lay. She saw no other face than his in that burning glow of sunlight; she heard no other sound in all that tempest of emotion, save the cry that he was dead.

"I am too late! too late again—my God!" she cried, in her delirium. "Oh people of Paris!—have you no shot, no steel for me? What was I once among you!—

a stray and homeless thing, fed on his alms, saved by his mercy, reared in honor and in innocence through him alone. And I forsook him, I denied him, I was ashamed of my debt, I was apostate to his love. Kill me with him if you have pity in you. I am viler than the vilest in your streets!"

In her madness, the truth seemed to her all the atonement that was left; in her remorse, the vengeance that she forced upon herself was wider, deeper, more cruel, than any vengeance that men take on guilt. There was a terrible justice in her expiation:—to the people whom she had scorned with all the gay scorn of her proud life, from the childish days when she had trodden on her vine-crown, her confession and her humiliation were now rendered.

To the multitude the words bore no meaning; and her voice was drowned in the moan of their own lamentation, that was loud as the moan of the sea. But he heard, and his eyelids unclosed, and his gaze dwelt on her in that speechless and immeasurable love of which never in one hour of her life had she once been worthy—until now.

"Viva mine," he murmured, in the old, sweet, familiar phrase of other days, "thou dost wrong to thyself. Thy sins have been but a woman's foibles. I forgave them long ago. Truth is with thee now, let it abide with thee forever. Where truth is not, how shall there be peace? In his love thou wilt have no need of mine. Have no memory of my life save such as may be glad to thee. I made thy happiness—once. Remember only that. I die content. I have saved all these from slaughter,—these children,—they may yet be great men, and free. Life has been sweet,—ah, God!—but death is welcome. Stoop down and kiss me once—once—it will leave no shame on thy lips for him."

For awhile he rested, motionless, breathless, with his eyes blind to the light, and his ear hearing no more the wail of the anguish beneath him.

Then suddenly he raised himself erect, and looked upon the great, still crowd below, and upward at the summer skies.

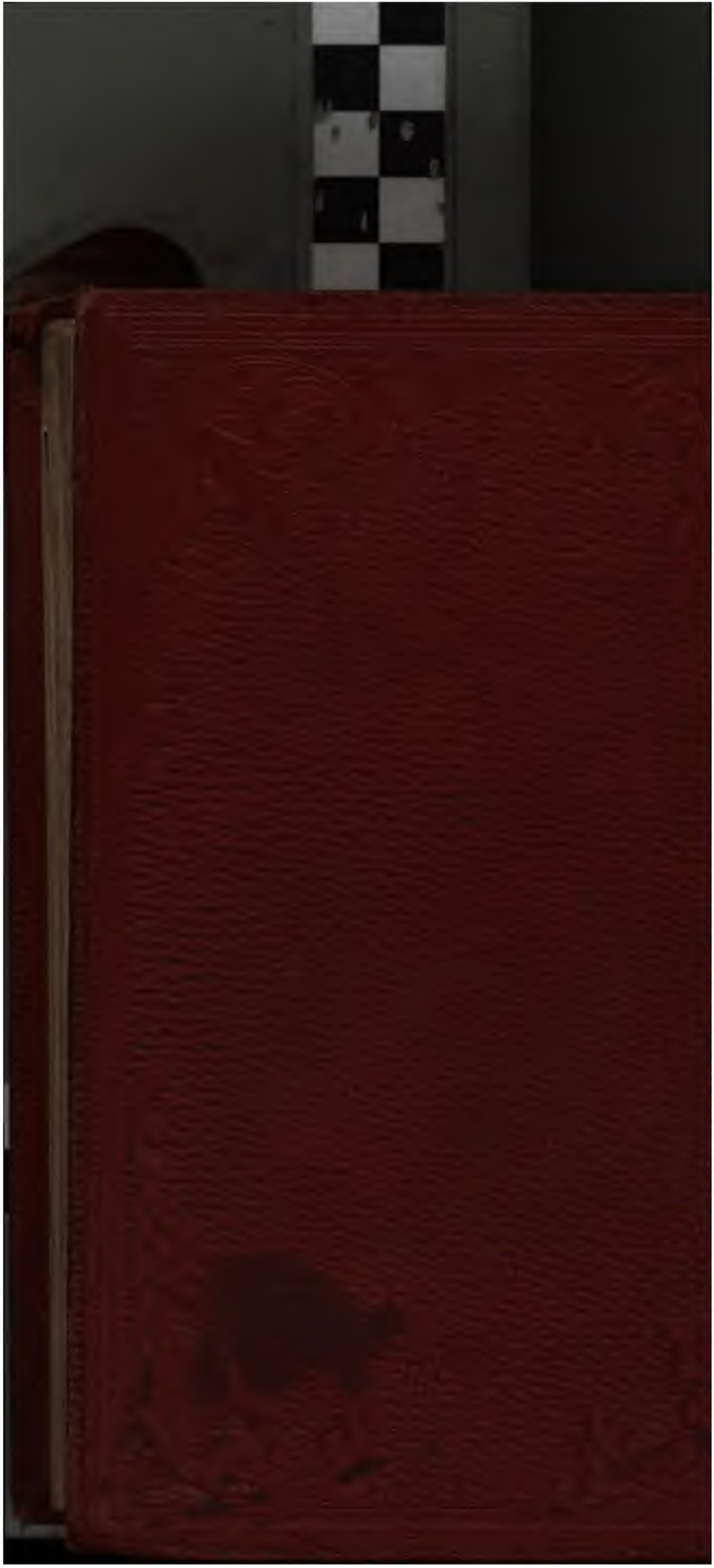
Earth had been ever so fair to him, and men so well-be-

loved: and never again would his sight behold the greenness of the summer world, or the faces of his brethren.

"Let my death be the ransom of your lives," he cried to them, while all the strength and sweetness of his voice returned, and rang over the stricken multitude. "Keep my memory in your hearts a little while. If it come ever between you and any guilt, I shall not have lived my life in vain. You suffer for me now?—ah! how soon will you forget? Stand back, and let me see the sun once more—once more: it is the smile of God."

And, looking upward to the last, he died.

Over the whole city a great silence fell; and with that hour the slaughter ceased. Even as he had loved them in his life, so in his death he saved them.

And the people mourned, refusing to be comforted.

THE END.